Men's Fitness GUIDE

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO

HOME WORKOUTS

- ☑ BUILD MUSCLE
- ☑ BURN FAT
- ☑ SAVE MONEY

80

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ISSUE 7

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Getting started | Introduction

Get motivated

Maintain workout mojo to achieve your goals!

Set realistic, measurable goals
Don't set yourself up for a fall with unrealistic aims such as losing a stone in a week. A measurable goal, such as wanting to lift 80kg on the bench press, will give you focus and you can track your progress.

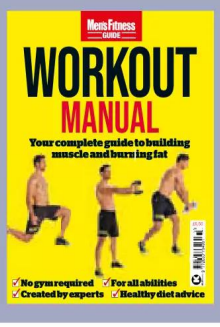
Change your routine
Every two weeks, change up your routine. It could be a tiny thing such as the exercise order, or variations of a move. This keeps your workouts fresh and gives your body the stimulus it needs to keep progressing.

Give it five minutes
If you're struggling, get into your workout kit asap and have everything set up the night before. Start with five minutes; you'll probably end up doing your full workout. If you're unmotivated to carry on, study your goals and routine to see why. Perhaps you need a change of scene, or some new kit. Negative, limiting thoughts are easily beaten if you take a step back to reassess.

Keep a training diary
Recording and seeing your progression down on paper gives you great motivation. You don't have to record every detail of your workout, you could just write down your performance for the two biggest lifts in your workout. That will also help you realise when you need to change your routine because you'll easily spot when you've stopped progressing.

ABOUT THE MEN'S FITNESS GUIDES

Men's Fitness Guides is a series to help you improve your fitness with training and nutrition, using expertly curated advice from exercise specialists, nutritionists, and fitness editors. Each issue focuses on a single topic – next month is Build a Fighter's Body. For the rest of the series see: shop.kelsey.co.uk/issue/MEG



Training begins now

Working out at home is an accessible way of getting fit and stronger. This guide tells you all you need to know to hit your muscle targets

Welcome to the **Complete Guide To Home Workouts**, your comprehensive resource for exercising at home. Think of this guide as your personal trainer in booklet form, no matter if you're a complete beginner to exercise, or an experienced home fitness fan.

Firstly, consult your GP before embarking on a new fitness regime if you have any concerns. For example if you have any personal or family history of a heart condition, or previous injuries or illnesses that could be worsened by exercise.

By using the exercises, advice and workouts in this guide, you'll develop a lean and muscular physique. The moves and training systems we've selected will give you great results, whether you've been working out for years – or are a fitness fledgling!

The exercise demonstration pages show you how to perform effective moves with perfect form, while the workout pages give you some examples of common training methods. You can then design your own workouts by arranging your exercises according to the principles of the best training method that you have chosen for yourself.

All you have to do is make sure that you structure your workouts to give your muscles progressively tougher training challenges.

Working out at home is incredibly accessible because you can start without having to buy any kit. If you want to make fantastic progress, buying simple equipment such as dumb-bells and a gym ball will allow you to do a wide variety of workouts, helping you to keep progressing and stay motivated.

What's in the guide?

This guide starts with a clear and full guide to basic training theory. By understanding the key variables involved in a workout, such as the number of sets and reps you perform, you stand a better chance of achieving the body that you've always wanted.

The exercise demonstration and workout pages of the book are split into chapters focusing on different bits of kit. The first contains all the best moves you can do by using bodyweight alone, as well as some sample workouts you can use depending on what you want to get out of your training sessions.

That's followed by a chapter on dumb-bells and gym balls, which includes a gear guide, multiple

muscle-building moves and three intense sample workouts. The extra kit chapter explores how adding a few simple items such as a pull-up bar, medicine ball and resistance band – which is what the exercises that follow focus on – can allow you to train in new, interesting and productive ways.

The barbell and bench and chapter complete the training section and show you how to use big moves for maximum muscle growth.

What else should I know?

What you eat has as much of an impact on your shape as the amount of training you do, so be sure to keep your diet in check. Our nutrition guides such as **Meals That Make Muscle** (from shop.kelsey.co.uk/subscription/MEG) explain how vital it is to support fitness with nutrition.

Getting started | Introduction

Muscle myths

Don't let these common muscle myths hamper your training

Myth: Weight training will make you bulky
Reality: Even if you train regularly you won't suddenly sprout huge muscles. Training properly will increase your muscle size, but this happens over time. If you don't want your workouts to have a muscle-building effect, you need to adjust key variables, such as how many reps you perform, so they have more of either a strength or endurance effect than a muscle gain one.

Myth: Enough sit-ups give you a six-pack
Reality: Doing crunches will strengthen and define your abs but it will do little to remove any body fat that's hiding them. You can't lose fat from any one part of your body so, if you want to shift your spare tyre, eat healthily and perform exercises that burn lots of calories too.

Myth: It's safer to lift weights slowly
Reality: In rehabilitation, patients perform exercises at a slow tempo to retrain their bodies to move smoothly – a tactic used in gyms too. If you're always in control of the lifting and lowering phases of an exercise there's little risk of injury. Indeed, performing reps with speed trains the muscles to react quickly in unexpected, real-world situations, which is how you protect yourself from injury. It also activates more muscle fibres, leading to greater gains.

Myth: Machines are safer than free weights
Reality: The makers of weights machines advertise that their equipment isolates target muscles and prevents injury by eliminating room for error. But the restrictive movements of machines might actually increase the risk of injury. Machines are rigid and therefore limit natural movement. Free weights make your body adjust naturally through the exercise's range of motion according to your strength level, speed of movement, and proficiency.

Myth: More training means more muscle
Reality: Muscle growth happens while you're recovering, not while you're working out. If you don't leave enough time between sessions, you won't let your muscles complete the repair process that makes them bigger and stronger.

Advice for beginners

If you're new to weight training, follow this advice to avoid injury

Warm up properly
Always warm up properly before any exercise (p12) to stay injury free.

Stop if it hurts
If you feel pain at any time during your workout, stop. The saying 'no pain, no gain' is for old-school PE teachers who don't know what they're talking about. Working through pain could do serious damage to muscles, joints or tendons.

Watch your form
Maintain perfect form for each repetition of every exercise, which is detailed in this guide. If you don't have good form you won't get the full benefit of the time and effort of exercise and may injure yourself.

Start light
Pick a weight you can manage easily the first time you perform any lifting. This way you can perfect your performance first, then build up weight over time.

Brace your core
You can help to stabilise your body and reduce your injury risk by engaging your core during an exercise. To do this, start by ensuring that you are standing or sitting up straight with your hips in line with your torso. Now imagine that someone is about to punch you in the stomach and you have to tense your abdominal muscles to take the blow. You need to maintain that contraction throughout the move to protect your lower back from muscle strains.

Keep training – and measuring
Bad news: your body won't magically stay buff once you hit your goals. Stick to healthy eating (the odd cheat is ok), and tweak cardio and weight regimes if you notice unwanted gains or losses.

Designing your workouts

Use the following advice to create workouts that will help you achieve your exercise goals

Starting a workout without knowing what you want to achieve, what exercises you're going to do, or how you're going to perform them... is not going to give you optimum results. To achieve workout aims, design and stick to a specific programme. Of course you can't do that without understanding key variables involved in how you perform each move. The main are:

- **Repetitions – Also known as reps, this is the number of times you lift a weight or perform a move within a set.**
- **Sets – Reps done back to back.**
- **Rest – Rest between sets/moves.**
- **Tempo – The speed of your reps.**
- **Frequency – How often you perform a workout.**

Once you know the variables, you then decide how to use them to achieve your muscle-building goals. There is, however, no such thing as the perfect muscle-building routine. You simply need basic knowledge of what makes your muscles grow.

For example resistance exercises create microscopic tears in your muscles. Your body then responds to this stimulus and your muscles repair themselves to become bigger and stronger than before. But if you repeat the same workout, your body will stop adapting to the stimulus and your gains will plateau. To avoid that, make sure you regularly alter the variables described on the left.

The most common and effective methods of grouping exercises have been given workout names. These names tell you broadly what the session involves so, for example, a superset workout will typically involve doing pairs of exercises performed back to back, resting between sets of pairs of exercises rather than sets of individual exercises. More information about these common routines can be found in the workouts section of each kit chapter as you progress through the rest of the guide.

But remember, there's no one way to address workout variables. That's partly because people respond to training in different ways and partly because strength and conditioning research is always evolving. Having said that, it's rare for new findings to challenge credible workout research.

Repetitions

The number of reps per set for each exercise is, arguably, the most important variable. Rep numbers affect all other variables and impact whether your goal is developing muscle strength, size or endurance.

Strength coaches generally agree certain rep ranges have particular training effects and these are shown in the box overleaf. Low reps, e.g. 1-8 are best for strength; between 8-12 reps is best for adding muscle mass; and 12-20 reps will develop muscle endurance. In each case, to get the desired effect, aim to reach failure. This is where you are unable to complete another rep without compromising perfect form on the final set. If you reach your target rep and feel you could perform more, then you need heavier weights!

As well as people responding to resistance training differently, separate muscles in the body respond differently depending on function. For example, slow-twitch muscle fibres – which are smaller fibres used in long-distance endurance exercise – will get strength gains at a higher rep range. Fast-twitch muscle fibres are the larger fibres involved in short, explosive movements.

And whilst this guide is great to learn about losses and gains and plan for home workouts, if you have any niggling doubts, book a one-off personal trainer for a face-to-face tutorial on kit and form.

Sets

The usual weight training guide is to do three sets of ten to 12 reps, as that allows you to fatigue your muscles in a time that maximises training effect. Current guidelines from the American College Of Sports Medicine (ACSM), for example, say beginners should do 1-3 sets of 8-12 reps. The number of sets you perform should

Getting started | Training principles

be directly linked to your number of reps. Generally, the two should be inversely related, so the more sets you do the fewer reps you perform and vice versa.

Studies show the most effective workout duration for strength and muscle building is about 45 minutes. After that, training efforts can be counterproductive because testosterone levels drop and stress hormone levels rise, so the number of exercises in your workout should affect how many sets you perform. If you include a high number of exercises in your workout you may need to reduce the sets per exercise you perform.

Your level of experience should also be a factor. If you're very new to training, you may want to consider doing just one or two light sets of each exercise to get your muscles used to performing the movements without overstressing them.

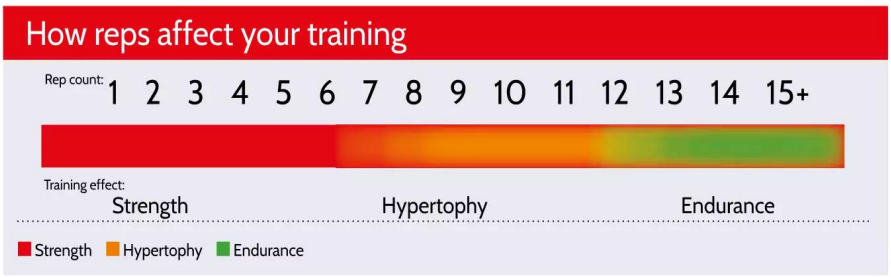
As you improve, you can steadily increase the total sets you complete. Experienced lifters get better strength and hypertrophy (muscle growth) results by doing more sets with fewer repetitions. That's why the ACSM guidelines for advanced weight trainers suggest doing 3-6 sets of up to 12 reps to maximise that muscle growth.

Tempo

The number of sets and reps you perform isn't the only variable that determines the training effect you'll get from your workouts. The speed at which you complete each phase of a rep also plays a part.

For example, doing ten repetitions of a biceps curl, as fast as possible won't have the same effect on your muscles as doing the move slowly.

To maximise strength and size gains, conditioning research suggests that your muscles should be under tension for between 40 to 70 seconds per set, provided you're not using extremely low repetition ranges. Lifting in this way uses more anaerobic energy, which produces lactate and prompts the release of



Training principles | Getting started

growth hormones and testosterone.

It's also important to use the right lifting speed within a rep. To make sure your muscles are under tension for long enough, take one second to lift the weight, pause then take two to three seconds to lower. The reason you should take longer to lower the weight is that size gains are best made during the eccentric (lowering) phase of the lift. Taking your time will also help you recruit stabilising muscles, which protect your joints and support bigger muscles when you attempt heavy lifts. Another benefit is that slower lifting takes any risk of using momentum during the exercise.

Some exercises, however, such as the snatch, have to be performed at speed because they require explosive movement to lift weight that's heavy enough for you to get a training benefit. As with sets and reps, it's also important to vary the tempo, so try to avoid using the same speed for every exercise and every workout.

Rest

The rest you take determines whether or not you're able to complete the next section of your workout. As a rule, sets with few reps will require the most rest. This is because they train the nervous system and fast-twitch muscle fibres, which fatigue easily and take longer to recover – up to five minutes when you perform very low reps of an explosive move with heavy weights. As you increase the number of reps, you train your slow-twitch muscle fibres, which are harder to fatigue.

Different exercises also require different rest times. Big compound moves such as squats and deadlifts require longer rests of about two minutes. Single-joint isolation moves, however, may only require 30 seconds' rest between exercises.

Those new to weight training may need to take longer rests than more experienced lifters, who have a higher tolerance to the lactate produced during lifts. How much you weigh can also affect your rest times, with heavier lifters needing longer to recover between sets.

Getting started | Training principles

Essentially, your rest periods are effective if you can reach positive failure on the last rep of the set. This means you are unable to lift the weight with perfect form but can lower it under control. If you don't reach that point, your rest may be too long or inconsistent. It's vital to remember rest is the same as any other training variable and you should change rest you take to stimulate new muscle growth.

Selecting and ordering your exercises

The exercises you choose depend on what you want to achieve! The sample workouts in each of the chapters will give you an example of how to select exercises according to goals, such as developing a particular body part, losing fat, or developing explosive power for sports.

Structuring your workout properly is important because various moves place different demands on your body. Some workouts use multiple muscle groups, whereas some isolate small muscle groups. The speed, pattern of movement and body parts targeted should all influence how you order your exercises. The following guidelines will help you to structure your workouts to maximise muscle growth and strength gains and minimise injury risk.

Start your workout explosive

Explosive exercises such as the hang clean are very demanding so they need to be performed when you are relatively fresh. Do these moves earlier in your workout than simpler moves such as triceps extensions.

Hard moves first; easy ones last

Complete large muscle group moves, such as squats and deadlifts, at the beginning of your workout to ensure perfect form. It also means your core is strong enough to stabilise your body and reduce injury. Do easier moves, such as biceps curls, later in the workout.

Keep workouts balanced

Unless you are specifically doing an unbalanced workout – for example, one made up exclusively of pushing movements – try to keep your workouts balanced. So, for every pushing exercise you do, you should do a pulling one. See p45 for more.

Frequency

How many workouts you perform each week is often influenced by work and family commitments. But if you lead a busy life, the good news is you don't need to work out seven days a week to see great results. Doing from three to five workouts a week should be sufficient to achieve your workout goals.

Exactly how many sessions you do will depend on a number of factors. One thing that should influence training frequency is what sort of workouts you're doing. A hard full-body session may mean you need to leave at least 48 hours between sessions in order for your muscles to recover and repair themselves to be stronger then before. However, if you are focusing on a particular body part in each workout, you may be able to train the following day if you work on a different body part.

One common mistake is to think that the more workouts you do, the stronger and more muscular you'll become. As mentioned in the previous page it's while you're resting, rather than while working out, that your muscles get bigger and stronger. If you stress your muscles before they've had a chance to repair themselves this may cause what's known as overtraining, where you lose strength and muscle mass and feel lethargic.

Some muscle groups take longer to recover than others. Larger muscle groups, particularly those with a comparatively higher percentage of fast-twitch muscle fibres such as the hamstrings, may take longer to recover than smaller muscle groups such as the calves.

Doing big compound lifts such as deadlifts also places more stress on your nervous system than smaller lifts, such as wrist curls, so you'll need longer to recover. You should also take longer to recover from intense sessions, where you do low reps of heavy weights, than you do from endurance and stability sessions, where you do high reps of light weights.

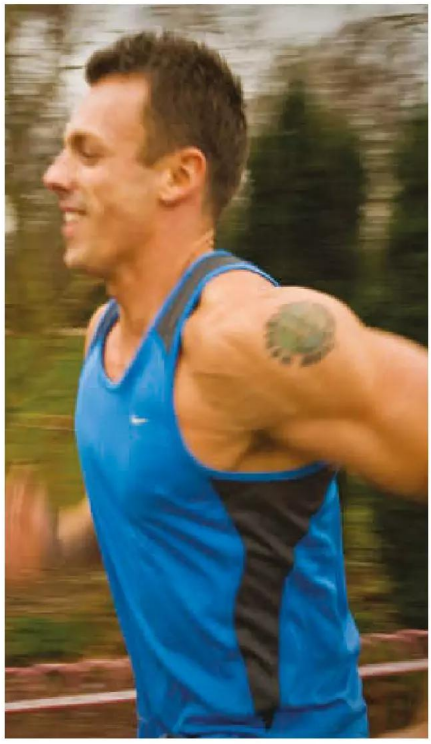
Improving your cardio fitness

Structure your cardio sessions to complement your weight training

You may think that adding long runs to your home workouts will complement your muscle building work. In fact, it can have the opposite effect.

While cardio training will improve heart and lung function and prepare your lower body for endurance events, it doesn't have a great effect on muscle size. Doing long, steady-state cardio sessions can even break down your muscle tissue, replacing bulky fast-twitch fibres with slender slow-twitch ones that are better suited to pounding the pavements mile after mile.

Weight training is good for building muscle but doesn't offer all the benefits you get from running, swimming or cycling. To get the best of both worlds, follow these rules:



1 Don't do weights and cardio back to back

If your main goal is to build muscle, keep weights and cardio sessions separate. Doing cardio immediately before weights will leave you feeling tired and will lead to poor lifting performance. Doing cardio straight after a weights session can undo the muscle-building effects of a workout.

The answer is to do them on separate days, which gives muscle time to recover between sessions.

2 Keep cardio sessions short and intense

When you start a run – or any other type of cardiovascular activity – your body uses energy from its own fat supplies and the food you've eaten. After about 45 minutes of exercise it then switches to take energy from your muscles, and will eventually break down muscle tissue as you steadily plod away. The solution, unsurprisingly, is to keep your cardio sessions to under 45 minutes in length.

To avoid losing out on the cardio benefits of a long run, make your sessions intense. The best way to do this is with intervals. An interval session involves periods of intense activity followed by periods of lower intensity recovery. Try the interval session in the box to the right.

As your endurance and strength improves, you can increase the duration or intensity of intervals without lengthening the session.

3 Keep eating right

Good nutrition is vital to achieving the body you want. If you're doing weights plus cardio it's even more crucial; you need to fuel your exertions in cardio sessions and still have enough calories to build the muscle you've trained so hard for. For more expert wellbeing and nutrition advice, see our other guides at: shop.kelsey.co.uk/subscription/MEG

Sample interval run

The pyramid interval

This session builds up your bursts of speed gradually and tapers off at the end as your energy levels are dwindling. Use a running watch to time your intervals. If you can't complete the session, do as much as you can and add on as you improve.

- 10 minutes easy jog
- 30 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 30 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 60 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 60 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 90 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 90 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 60 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 60 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 30 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 30 secs fast, 60 secs recovery
- 10 minutes easy jog

Pre-workout warm-up

Get your body ready for muscle growth and reduce your injury risk with this quick pre-workout warm-up

The warm-up can seem like a waste of time, but it's one of the most neglected aspects of a workout. A proper warm-up will raise your core temperature and prepare your muscles for better – injury-free – results. Some light cardio ups heart rate to pump oxygen and nutrients to your muscles, and elevates body temperature. Warm muscles are more elastic, so you'll work them through a fuller range of motion.

After, do a few dynamic stretches (opposite). These prime the muscles you'll use during the workout for heavy lifting. Dynamic stretches involve moving continuously, placing the muscle under more tension with each repetition, which prepares joints and nerves for the actions they're about to perform. They differ from static stretches (p14), which shouldn't be done before a workout. A study found pre-workout static stretches reduce a muscle's power during a workout, which has a negative effect on strength gains.

When you start your workout, perform a warm-up set of each exercise, where you do the move with a light weight. This ensures you know your form is correct – but it doesn't count as one of the sets.

Warm-up dynamic stretches

Do ten repetitions of each of the following exercises, alternating sides with each rep where appropriate. Start gently and aim to increase the range of motion with each rep

Lunge with reverse flye

Lateral lunge with twist

Alternating split deadlift

Squat to reach

Getting Started | **Stretching**

Post-workout stretch

Do the following stretches after a weights session to increase your flexibility and reduce injury risk

Post-workout stretching is an area of weight training that divides expert opinion. Some coaches think that it offers no benefits while others recommend static stretching. This is where you relax a muscle and hold it under tension for a specific period of time without moving.

On the whole, most trainers advocate stretching at the end of a workout. It lengthens muscle after training it, which helps avoid injury and speeds recovery.

How to stretch

After your workout, spend five minutes doing some gentle cardio, such as jogging on the spot, to bring your heart rate down. Then perform the stretches opposite, paying particular attention to the ones that target the muscles you worked during your session.

Get into the stretch position and allow your muscle to relax. As you place pressure on your muscle you should be able to feel it relaxing and lengthening.

You can slowly increase pressure on the muscle during the stretch but you should never force it or 'bounce' because that can damage the muscle.

Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds before swapping sides, but if you feel pain stop immediately to avoid potential injury.

Calves

Take a step forward and press the back heel of your foot down so that you can feel the stretch in your rear calf.

Hamstrings

Keep your front leg straight and lean forward to feel the stretch in the hamstring of your front leg.

Quads

Hold your ankle and push your hips forward to feel the stretch in your thigh.

Hip flexors

Step forward into a lunge so that your back knee is in contact with the ground. Keep your body upright and push your hips forward.

Adductors

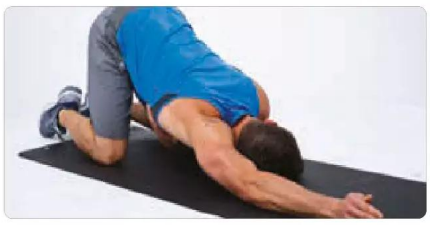
Touch your soles together and press gently on your knees with your elbows.

Glutes

Stand on one leg and balance the bottom of your raised shin on your standing knee. Sink down until you feel the stretch in your glutes.

Abs

Lie on a mat, palms under your shoulders and elbows tucked in. Raise your shoulders while keeping your hips on the ground.



Lats

Kneel and extend one arm out so it rests on the ground. Press down on your leading arm to feel the stretch down your side.

Foam rolling

Use this recovery tool to simulate a sports massage

Foam rolling is popular in post-workout recovery. It targets your fascia, an oft-forgotten, crucial but soft layer of connective tissue that supports muscles. Rollers have moved on from boring sandbag bosters of a decade ago, and now all kinds of massaging, ultra cold/hot, vibrating and kneading options are available. It's basically as pleasure/pain as a decent sports massage – but cheaper! As with any wellbeing habit, it's well worth it. Studies show if your fascia is healthy, your upper arms look primed for longer and shoulder joints stay youthful.

Why you need to do it

Overtraining, sudden impact, or injury can restrict the fascia, resulting in muscular inflammation and tension. Myofascial release with a foam roller – try Amazon, Asda or Tesco Extra – relaxes tension. Or, see nearby therapists at: myofascialrelease.uk

How it works

Foam rolling breaks an inflammation link to fibrosis, or thickening of connective tissue – causing muscular tension, then further inflammation. Myofascial release provides gentle pressure for a short time, which relaxes muscles, increases circulation and fluid drainage and stimulates the stretch reflex of the muscle and connective tissues.

Hamstrings

Balance on your hands with one or both of your hamstrings on the roller. Roll from the glutes to the knee.

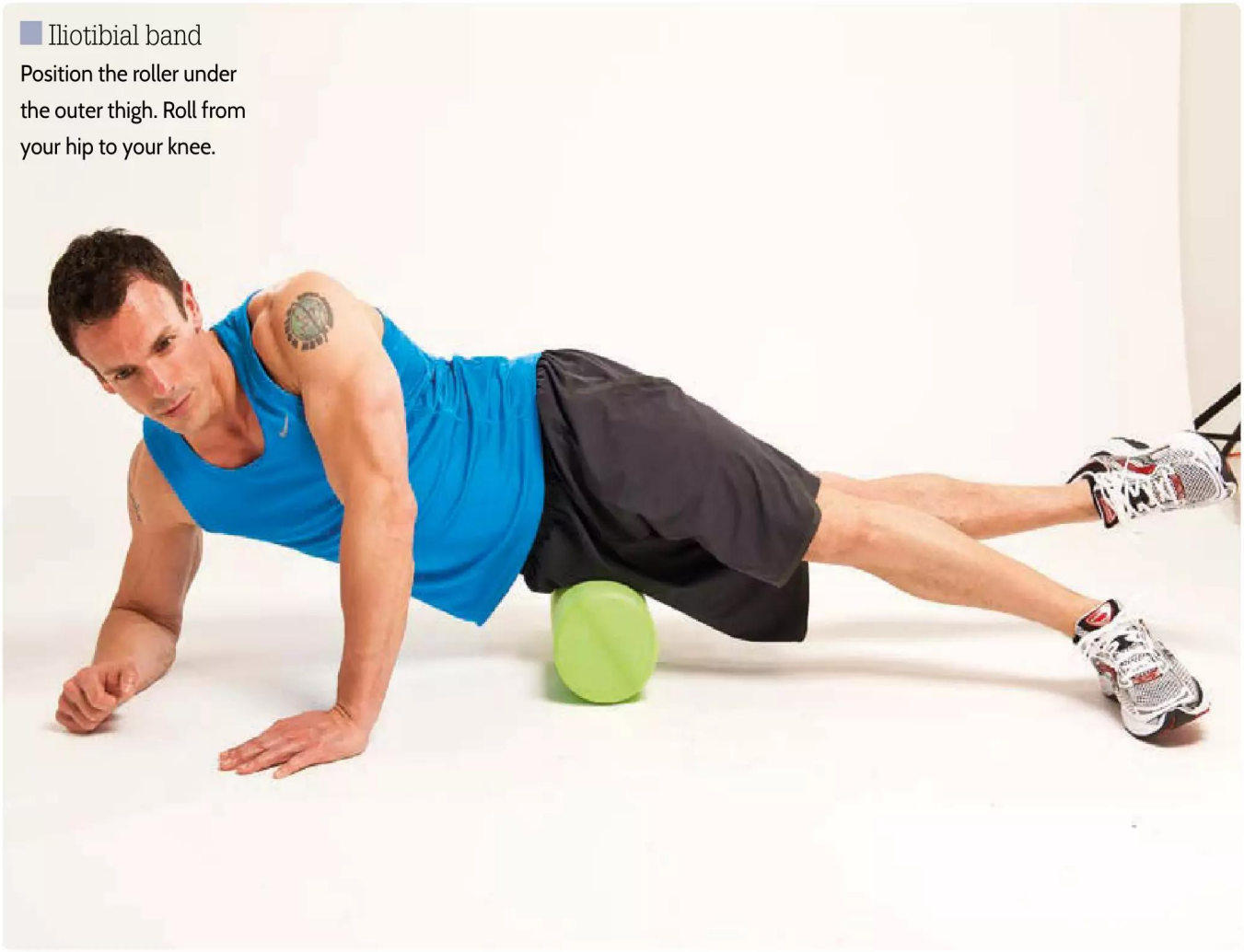
Hip flexors

Balance on your forearms with one hip on the roller. Roll from your upper thigh to your hip.

Getting Started | Foam rolling

Iliotibial band

Position the roller under the outer thigh. Roll from your hip to your knee.



Glutes

Start in the same position as for the hamstring roll, but move the roller to your backside.

Quads

Balance on your forearms with one or both thighs on the roller. Roll from your hips to your knees.

Get big: bodyweight only

Start building muscle right now – using the power of your own body

If you've bought this guide but haven't got round to researching and investing in workout kit, don't worry. You can build muscle straight away by doing bodyweight exercises.

For a muscle to grow in size and strength, it has to move against resistance (in this case, yourself) to create microscopic tears in the muscle fibres. These fibres will heal bigger and stronger than before. You should still follow the training principles outlined in the previous chapter so you may need to adjust your tempo, for example, if you want to work in a muscle-building rep range. That way, you can start gaining muscle before you've bought any kit.

This chapter teaches you the most effective moves, and we'll show you how to put them together to achieve your own muscle-shaping goals.

Bodyweight exercises such as one-leg squats develop joint stability because you have to push a significant level of resistance while balancing on one leg. Having control of your own bodyweight will also give you practical strength because you're working with the load you've carried around your whole life!

There are lots of bodyweight moves you can do to target your core muscles, which you'll need to develop if you want to progress safely to doing big lifts such as a lunges with dumb-bells or a barbell.

You can use bodyweight exercises to target any muscle group. However, as you improve you'll find it increasingly difficult to achieve the weight overload and diversity that will lead to muscle growth. When that happens, introducing some basic bits of kit such as a resistance band will help you avoid getting stuck in a training rut. You should, however, still include bodyweight exercises in some of your workouts because you need to constantly refresh and tweak the way you work out to make sure all your muscles are stimulated.

Bodyweight | Exercises

01 Chair dip

Target: triceps
Develop your triceps with this compound bodyweight move, which will also improve shoulder joint stability.

Start position
- Grip the edge of the chair with your hands
- Keep your feet together, your legs straight and your back upright

Movement
- Lower your body straight down, keeping your elbows pointing back, then press back up powerfully

02 Chair dip with leg lift

Target: triceps, core
Raising your leg introduces a rotational element to the exercise, which calls on your core to stabilise the movement.

Start position
- Keep shoulders back and your core braced

Movement
- Perform a chair dip but lift one leg off the floor as you lower your body
- Alternate legs with each repetition

03 Table chin-up

Target: biceps, lats, forearms
Use a table as a prop to build your biceps.

Start position
- Lie under a solid table and grip the edges above your shoulders
- Keep your body in a straight line from head to heels

Movement
- Pull up until your chest almost touches the table, pause for a second while you squeeze your shoulder blades together, then return slowly to the start

04 Crunch

Target: upper abdominals
Work your abs to build a solid six-pack with this classic mid-section move.

Start position
- Rest your fingers on your temples and don't pull your neck
- Hold your head off the floor
- Bend your knees at 90˚ and keep your feet flat on the floor

Movement
- Contract your abs to lift your shoulders off the floor
- Keep your lower back in contact with the floor and curl your chest towards your knees
- Pause at the top of the move to squeeze your abs, then lower slowly to the start

Bodyweight | Exercises

Reverse crunch

Target: lower abdominals

Hit your easily neglected lower abs with this simple move.

Start position

- Keep your head and shoulders on the floor and your arms by your sides
- Your thighs should be vertical and your knees should be bent at 90˚

Movement

- Contract your abs, then curl your knees towards your chest, keeping your knees bent at 90˚
- Pause at the top, then lower slowly to the start

Oblique crunch

Target: obliques

Work your side abs for a fuller development of your abdominals.

Start position

- Lie on your side with one arm in front of you, bending your knees for stability
- Touch your fingers to your temples on the side you're going to crunch

Movement

- Use your side abs to crunch up sideways, pause at the top of the move and lower slowly to the start

Exercises | Bodyweight

Start position
- Start with your fingers by your temples and crunch up to bring your right elbow to your left knee while extending your right leg

Bicycles

Target: abdominals
Use this dynamic move to hit your mid section from a range of angles.

Movement
- Twist your torso to the other side to bring your left elbow to you right knee while extending your left leg
- Use your abs to control the move and try not to strain at the neck

Plank

Target: core
Develop the muscles that support your spine with this classic static stability move.

Start position
- Position yourself so your feet are together and your body is straight from head to heels, with your elbows underneath your shoulders and your head looking down
- Hold the pose as long as possible without letting your hips sag

Bodyweight | Exercises

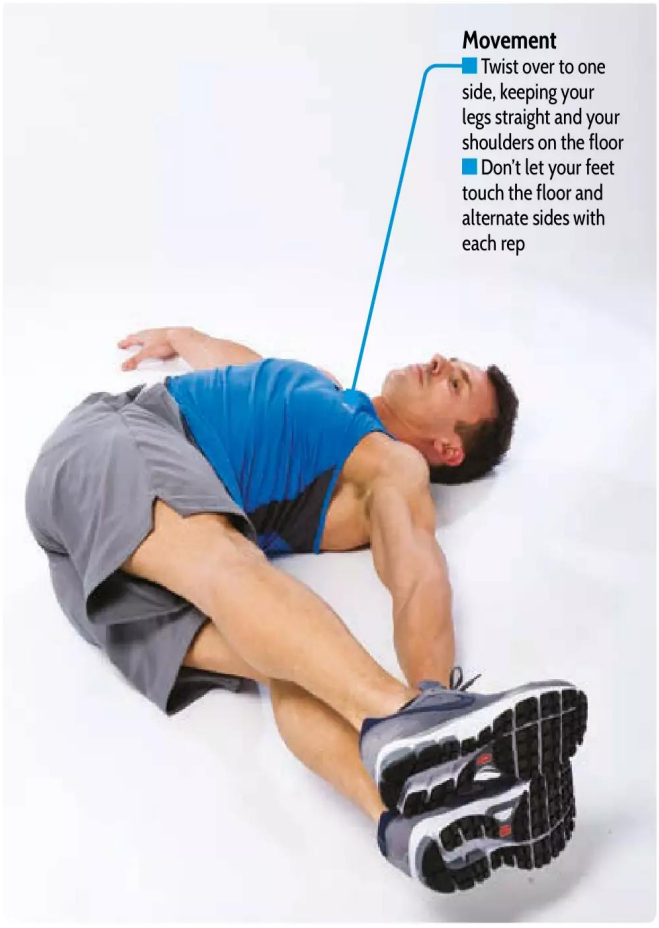
09

Start position
- Lie on your back with your arms out to the sides and your legs straight up in the air

Lower-body Russian twist

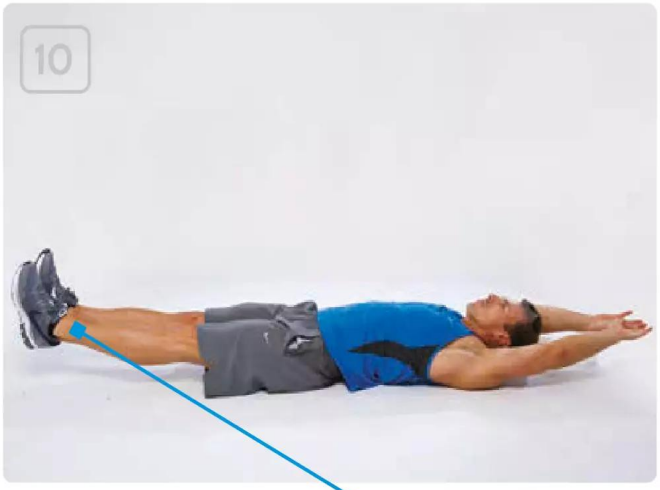
Target: lower abdominals

By transferring the rotation to your lower abdominals, you can do this move without any kit.



Movement
- Twist over to one side, keeping your legs straight and your shoulders on the floor
- Don't let your feet touch the floor and alternate sides with each rep

10

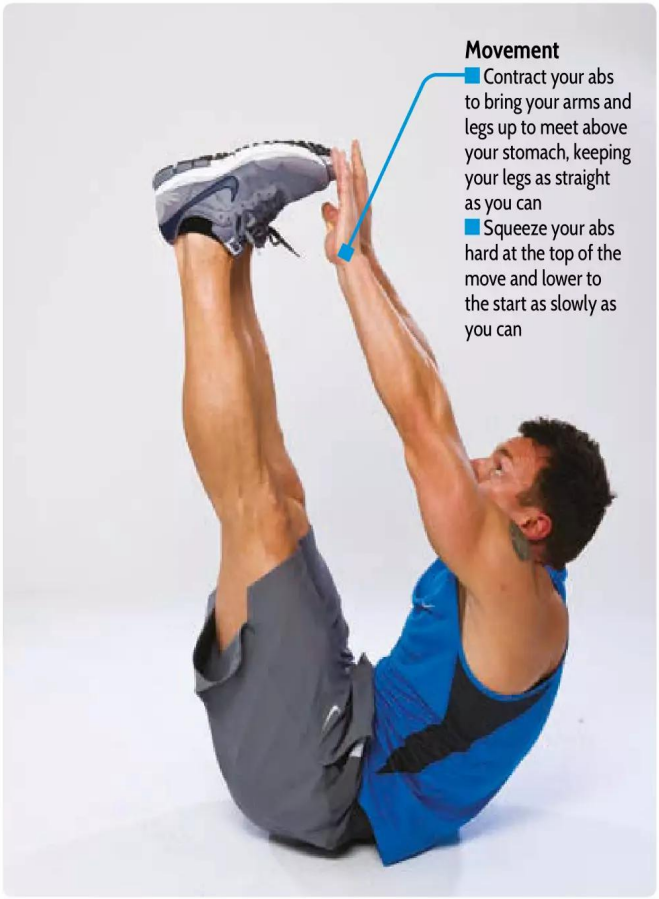


Start position
- Start with your arms behind your head, held off the floor, and your feet together, also off the floor

Jackknife

Target: upper and lower abdominals

This move requires a strong core to maintain perfect form and is great for developing a large part of your abs.



Movement
- Contract your abs to bring your arms and legs up to meet above your stomach, keeping your legs as straight as you can
- Squeeze your abs hard at the top of the move and lower to the start as slowly as you can

11

Start position
- Begin in a press-up position

Squat thrusts

Target: core, quads

Get your heart rate up and work your core with this tiring move, which is also good for developing your leg speed.

Movement
- Jump your feet forward to land them so your knees are under your chest
- Jump your feet back to the start and repeat the move

12

Start position
- Lie under a solid table and grip the edges above your shoulders so your fingers are pointing away from you

Table pull-up

Target: mid-traps, lats, rhomboids

Use your bodyweight and a simple prop to build a muscular back.

Movement
- Pull up until your chest touches the table, pause for a second while you squeeze your shoulder blades together, then return slowly to the start

Bodyweight | Exercises

13

Table pull-up and reach

Target: mid-traps, lats, rhomboids, core
This move builds strength and requires good core control to stabilise the movement.

Start position
- Lie under a solid table and grip the edges above your shoulders so your fingers are pointing away from you

Movement
- Pull up, then reach as high as you can with one hand
- Bring your hand back to the table and then lower back down
- Alternate hands with each rep

14

Two-point box

Target: lower back
This move is excellent for strengthening the muscles that support your spine, reducing your chance of injury during big lifts.

Start position
- Kneel on all-fours, then bring your elbow to meet your opposite knee beneath your stomach
- Keep looking down and stretch your arm and leg out straight

Movement
- Your body should form a straight line from foot to fingertips – don't let your hips rotate
- Hold that position for a count of two, return to the start and repeat on the opposite side

Dorsal raise with shoulder rotation

Target: lower back

This move protects your lower back from injury and the twist at the top of the move intensifies the muscle contraction.

Start position

- Start by lying on your front with your face and shoulders off the floor and your arms out to the sides, palms facing down

Movement

- Lift your chest off the floor, twisting your thumbs back so they point towards the ceiling
- Squeeze your shoulder blades together at the top of the move

Press-up

Target: chest, triceps

Do this classic move to build your chest and arms.

Start position

- Start with your hands level with your shoulders, just wider than shoulder-width apart
- Keep your body in a straight line from head to heels throughout the move

Movement

- Lower your body, making sure you keep your elbows pointing back rather than to the sides

Bodyweight | Exercises

17

Jump press-up

Target: chest, triceps
Develop your fast-twitch muscle fibres by pushing up explosively so both palms leave the floor.

Start position
- Begin in the press-up position

Movement
- Lower down, keeping your elbows tucked in to your body
- Push up explosively so your hands leave the floor, land and go straight into the next jump press-up

18

Press-up with knee lift

Target: chest, triceps, core
Adding a knee lift to the press-up challenges your core because it's forced to stabilise your body in an awkward position.

Start position
- Get in press-up position with your hands beneath your shoulders and your body in a straight line from your head to heels

Movement
- Lower your chest to the floor while bringing one knee up to your elbow
- Take care not to rotate your body as you lift your knee, and alternate sides with each press-up

Exercises | Bodyweight

Squat

18

Target: quads, glutes, hamstrings
This classic lower-body move builds muscle and stabilises your ankle, knee and hip joints.

Start position
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your toes turned out slightly
- Hold your arms straight out in front of you

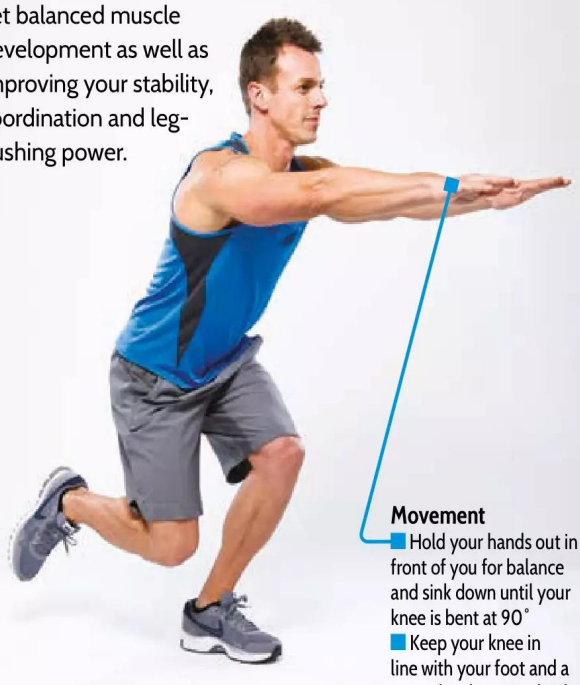
Movement
- Keeping your back upright, lower your body until your thighs are parallel to the floor, then return to the start

One-leg squat

19

Target: quads, glutes, hamstrings
Doing the move on one leg ensures you get balanced muscle development as well as improving your stability, coordination and leg-pushing power.

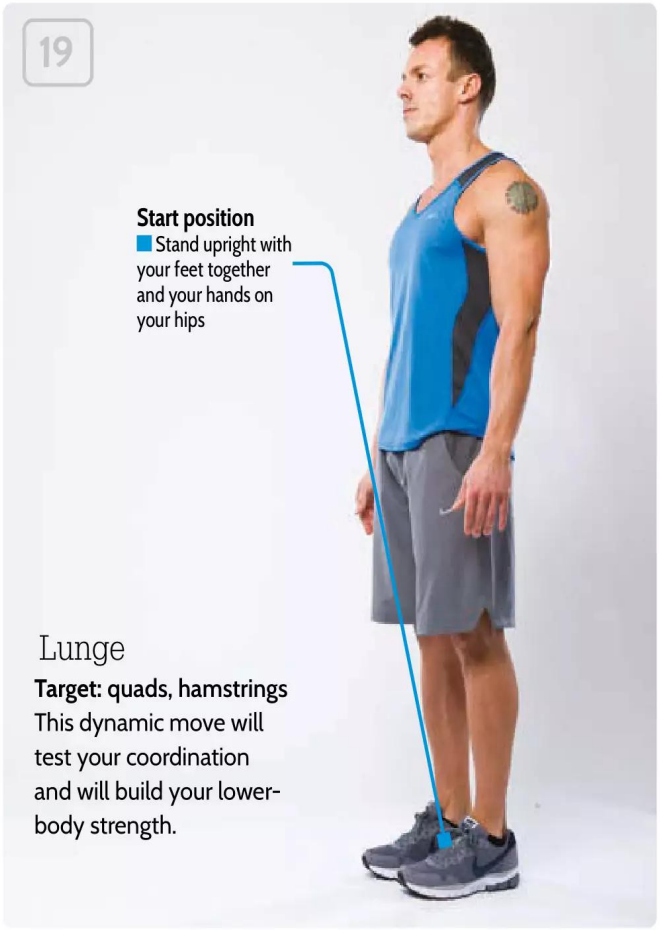
Start position
- Stand on one leg with one foot slightly off the floor behind you



Movement
- Hold your hands out in front of you for balance and sink down until your knee is bent at 90°
- Keep your knee in line with your foot and a natural arch in your back

Bodyweight | Exercises

19



Start position
- Stand upright with your feet together and your hands on your hips

Lunge

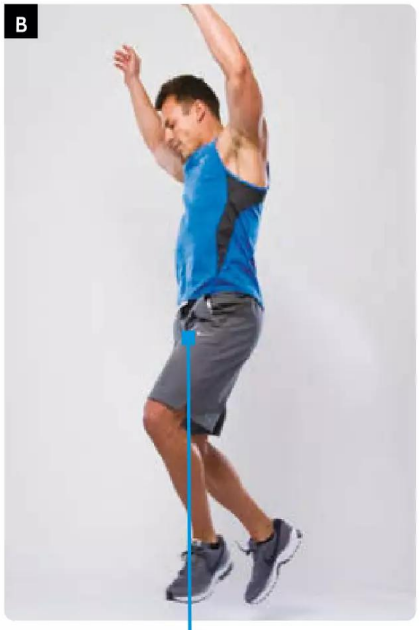
Target: quads, hamstrings

This dynamic move will test your coordination and will build your lower-body strength.

Movement
- Take a stride forwards and lower yourself in a fluid motion until your front knee is bent at 90° and your back knee nearly touches the floor
- Keep your front knee over your front toe and your back upright
- Push back to the start, then lunge forwards with your opposite foot

A

B



C

Lunge jump

Target: quads, hamstrings

Adding a jump to the move develops your explosive power while testing your balance and coordination.

Start position
- Begin in a lunge position

Movement
- Jump up, swapping your leg positions in mid air
- Land in the lunge position [C], absorbing the impact before going straight into the next lunge jump

Exercises | Bodyweight

20

Start position
Place one foot on the chair with your back upright and your arms by your sides

Chair step-up

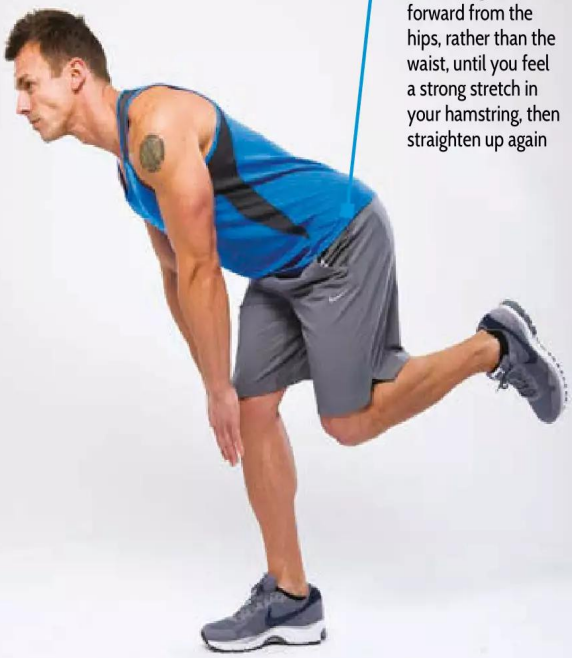
Target: glutes, quads
This exercise builds practical strength because it's similar to the movement you make when climbing stairs.

Movement
Push up with your leading leg then step back down the way you came

One-leg deadlift

Target: hamstrings
Strengthen the backs of your legs with this move that also improves your balance.

Start position
Stand on one leg with your hands by your sides



Movement
Keeping your back straight, tilt forward from the hips, rather than the waist, until you feel a strong stretch in your hamstring, then straighten up again

Bodyweight | Exercises

21 Inverted shoulder press

Start position
- Place your feet on a chair or box and put your hands on the floor beneath your shoulders
- Shuffle back with your hands and bend at the hips until your body forms an inverted V-shape

Movement
- Bend at the elbows to lower your upper body until your head almost touches the floor, then press back up

Target: shoulders
It's difficult to target your shoulders using bodyweight alone, but this move will get them working.

22 Woodchop

Target: core, lower back, quads, shoulders
Develop your ability to transfer force from the lower to the upper half of your body with this sporty move.

Start position
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your hands in front of you
- Squat and twist to one side so your hands are outside one of your knees

Movement
- Stand up and twist to the opposite side, lifting the heel you're twisting away from and raising your hands over your shoulder

Full-body workout

The best thing about full-body workouts is that they allow you to work a large number of muscle fibres in a short space of time. The result is that your body releases a flood of growth hormones that will make your muscles get bigger and stronger. Full-body no equipment workouts are great if you're new to training because they get your muscles used to weight training without too much stress. The downside of this workout is that it's hard to fully exhaust your muscle fibres.

Designing your workout

The key to a sound full-body workout is balance. That means making sure you have a pushing motion for every pulling motion you do and that you spend a roughly equal amount of time on your upper and lower body.

Compound exercises are a must for maximum muscle gains. They are multi-joint exercises that work several muscle groups together

Leave abs-specific exercises, such as the crunch, to the end of your workout. You don't want to exhaust your core muscles before they're called on to stabilise your spine in more demanding moves such as a table pull-up.

Full-body sample workout

1 Squat | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 27**

2 One-leg deadlift | **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 each side Page: 29**

3 Table pull-up | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 24**

4 Press-up | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 25**

5 Inverted shoulder press **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 30**

6 Woodchop | **Sets: 2 reps 10 each side Page: 30**

7 Jackknife | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 22**

Core stability workout

The terms 'core stability' and 'core strength' are well known: these muscles around your midriff – abs, obliques, hips and lower back – provide a crucial link between your upper and lower body. They're particularly crucial for whole-body moves, and are also vital in stabilising your spine during sport such as running or football.

A weak core means you may find it harder to transfer power, so the work you do on other muscle groups may be lost if your core lets you down. And of course poor core strength can cause back pain and poor posture too.

Designing your workout

The most common core training mistake is too much focus on the upper abs, such as tons of crunches. You need equal emphasis on training the muscles at the side and back of your midriff.

Target your core muscles from different angles – including rotational movements – for a thorough workout. The workout featuring on this page focuses on stability, meaning you should complete a relatively high number of reps per set.

Core stability sample workout

1. One-leg deadlift | **Sets: 2** **Reps: 10-12 each side** **Page: 29**
2. Woodchop | **Sets: 2** **Reps: 10-12 each side** **Page: 30**
3. Crunch | **Sets: 2** **Reps: 15** **Page: 19**
4. Dorsal raise | **Sets: 2** **Reps: 15** **Page: 25**
5. Oblique crunch | **Sets: 2** **Reps: 15 each side** **Page: 20**
6. Two-point box | **Sets: 2** **Reps: 15 each side** **Page: 24**
7. Lower-body Russian twist **Sets: 2** **Reps: 15 each side** **Page: 35**

Dumb-bells and gym ball gear guide

A gym ball and a set of dumb-bells are the cornerstone of a home gym. Here's what they do and how to buy them

Gym ball

What it does

Gym balls, also known as stability or Swiss balls, promote increased joint and core strength by forcing you to stabilise on an unstable surface. They're relatively cheap and portable so are perfect for home training.

What to look for

Durability: The cheaper the ball is, the more likely it is you'll need to replace it after a few months, so buy one that's anti-burst.

You need to make sure it can support your body weight and any additional weight such as dumb-bells, medicine balls or kettlebells.

Size: Gym balls come in different sizes. You want to be able to sit on top of the ball with your knees bent at about 90˚ and your feet flat on the floor, so taller people will need a larger size than shorter people. Use the following guide to find the right size:

User height	Ball size
1.50-1.64m	55cm
1.65-1.81m	65cm
1.82-2.00m	75cm

Dumb-bells

Dumb-bells allow you to perform a huge number of resistance exercises. They are incredibly versatile and can be used to exhaust, and therefore develop, the strength and size of any muscle. Because you hold a dumb-bell in one hand it creates instability, which forces the body to control itself to build balanced muscle development. There are three main types of dumb-bell: fixed, plate-loaded, and adjustable...

Fixed dumb-bells

It's quick and easy to use your desired fixed weight, but collecting individual weights can be expensive and take up space. If you invest in fixed dumb-bells, choose hexagonal ends, as they won't roll around on the floor between exercises.

Plate-loaded dumb-bells

Low-cost, so these appeal if you're on a budget. They have two collars to secure plates to both ends of a bar, which works your body the same as fixed and adjustable dumb-bells. But, it can make it time-consuming to alter weight between moves.

Adjustable dumb-bells

This variety lets you change weight quicker. With pricier adjustables you simply position a dial next to the weight you want to lift. While more expensive, they're more convenient and also allow you to stick rigidly to rest periods.

Dumb-bells & gym ball | Exercises

Start position
- Bend forwards at the hips and keep your back in its natural arch
- Start with your elbows bent at 90°

01

Two-arm dumb-bell kickback

Target:
triceps, core
Work the triceps on both arms and challenge your core at the same time.

Movement
- Straighten your arms while keeping your upper arms as still as possible
- Keep your core braced throughout the move to maintain a neutral arch in your spine

02

Gym ball chair dip

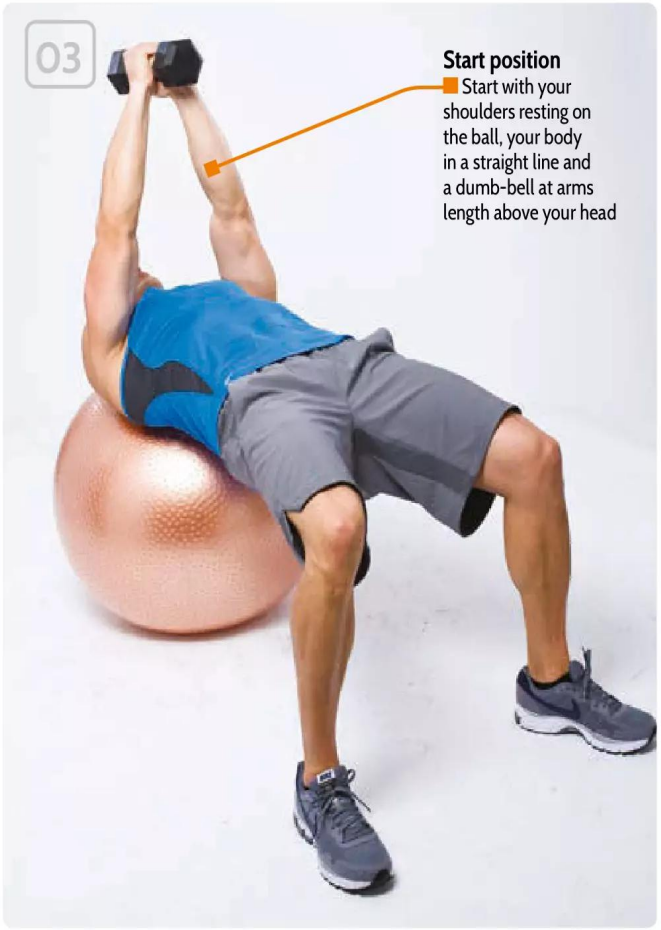
Target:
triceps, core
Increase the challenge to your triceps and core by placing your feet on a gym ball.

Start position
- Grip the edge of the chair with your hands and rest your heels on top of a gym ball
- Keep your feet together, your legs straight and your back upright

Movement
- Lower your body straight down, keeping your elbows pointing back, then press back up powerfully

Exercises | Dumb-bells & gym ball

03



Start position
- Start with your shoulders resting on the ball, your body in a straight line and a dumb-bell at arms length above your head

Gym ball dumb-bell Russian twist

Target: core
Using a gym ball takes some of the strain off your lower back but still poses a challenge to your core muscles.

Movement
- Twist your torso to one side until your arms are parallel to the floor
- Twist back to the opposite side, looking towards the dumb-bell

Start position
- Start with your back straight, your core braced and shoulders retracted
- Lean forward from the hips, not the waist
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and bend your knees slightly
- Hold the dumb-bells just outside your knees

04

Dumb-bell bent-over row

Movement
- Pull the weights up to your sternum, allowing your wrists to turn naturally during the movement and squeeze your shoulder blades together at the top of the move
- Slowly lower the dumb-bells back to the start

Target: traps, lats, rhomboids
Doing this classic back-building move with dumb-bells will give you balanced muscle development because it prevents your stronger side from taking more of the strain.

Dumb-bells & gym ball | Exercises

Start position
- Start with your back straight, your core braced and your shoulders retracted
- Lean forward from the hips, not the waist
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and bend your knees slightly
- Hold the dumb-bells together just in front of your knees, keeping a slight bend in the elbows

06

Bent-over flye

Target: upper back, shoulders

Get a strong upper back with this move that develops scapular retraction (the action of pulling your shoulder blades together).

Movement
- Raise the weights straight out to the sides without moving your upper body

Start position
- Wrap your body around the ball and jam your feet against a wall for support

07

Gym ball back extension

Target: lower back

Using a gym ball gives you a broad range of motion. It's also a crucial move for balancing the training effect of crunches and for improving posture.

Movement
- Lift your back until your body forms a straight line, but don't over-extend

Exercises | Dumb-bells & gym ball

08

Dumb-bell shrug

Target: upper traps

Add size to your upper back with this balanced move, which will also help stabilise your shoulder girdle and reduce your chances of sustaining a shoulder injury.

Start position
- Start with your palms facing inwards

Movement
- Raise your shoulders straight up without bending your elbows and hold the top position for one or two seconds

Gym ball dumb-bell chest press

09

Start position
- Support your head and shoulders on the ball and hold the dumb-bells at chest level
- Brace your core and make sure that your body is straight from head to knees and your knees are bent at 90°

Target: chest

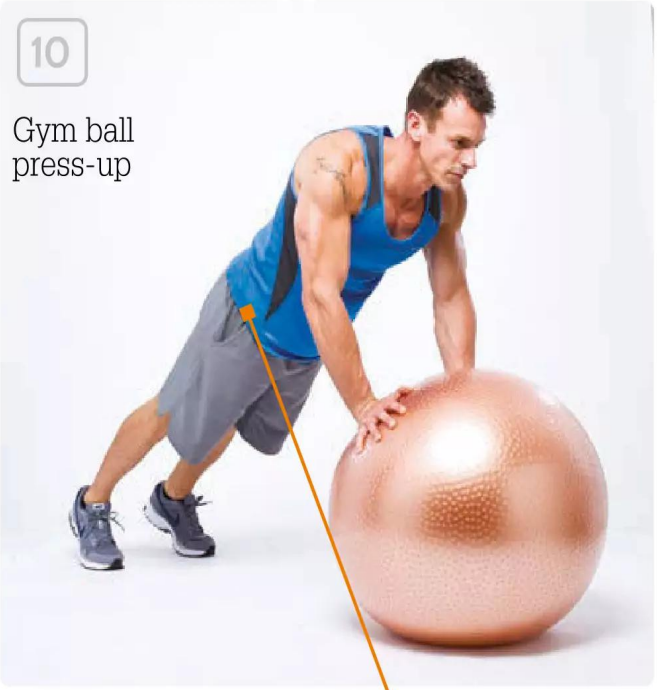
Using dumb-bells for this classic chest exercise will give you a good range of movement, balanced muscle development and will recruit your glutes and core to stabilise the move.

Movement
- Press the weights up, then lower them slowly back to the start

Dumb-bells & gym ball | Exercises

10

Gym ball press-up



Target: chest, triceps

Performing a press-up on a gym ball forces your chest muscles to control the movement, which will help when you come to perform heavier pressing exercises.

Start position

- Keep your body in a straight line from head to heels
- Grip the sides of the ball roughly in line with your shoulders

Movement

- Lower slowly by bending at the elbows and push back up powerfully

11

Gym ball decline press-up

Target: chest, shoulders, triceps and core

Resting your feet on top of a gym ball adds instability, to give your core a good workout.

Start position

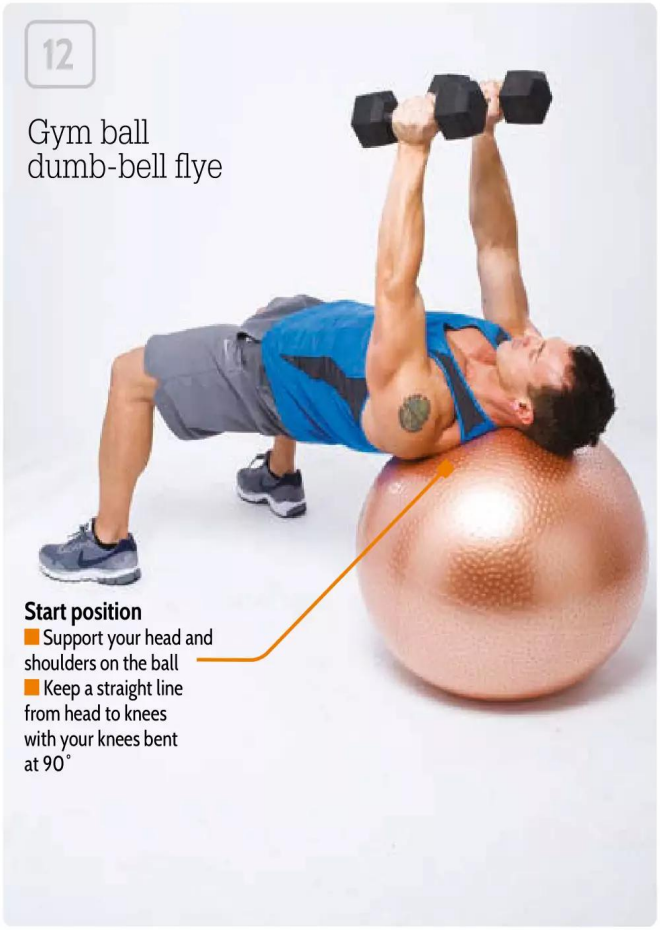
- Start with your hands on the floor beneath your shoulders
- Rest your feet together on top of the ball

Movement

- Perform a press-up but don't let your hips sag

Exercises | Dumb-bells & gym ball

12 Gym ball dumb-bell flye



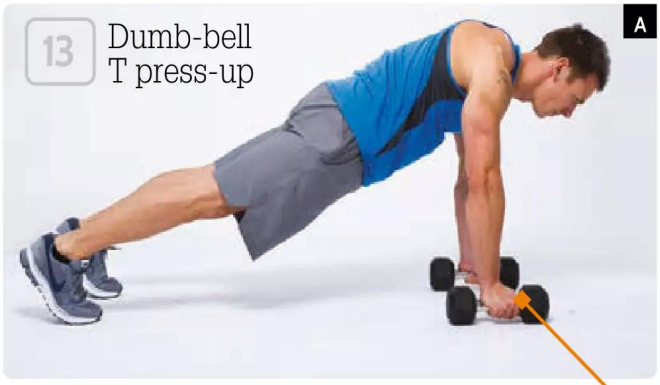
Start position
- Support your head and shoulders on the ball
- Keep a straight line from head to knees with your knees bent at 90˚

Target: chest
This exercise primarily targets your pectoral muscles but also recruits your core and glutes to stabilise the move.

Movement
- Have a slight bend in your elbows and lower the dumb-bells in an arc out to the side
- Use your chest muscles to return the weights to the start without arching your back

13 Dumb-bell T press-up

A

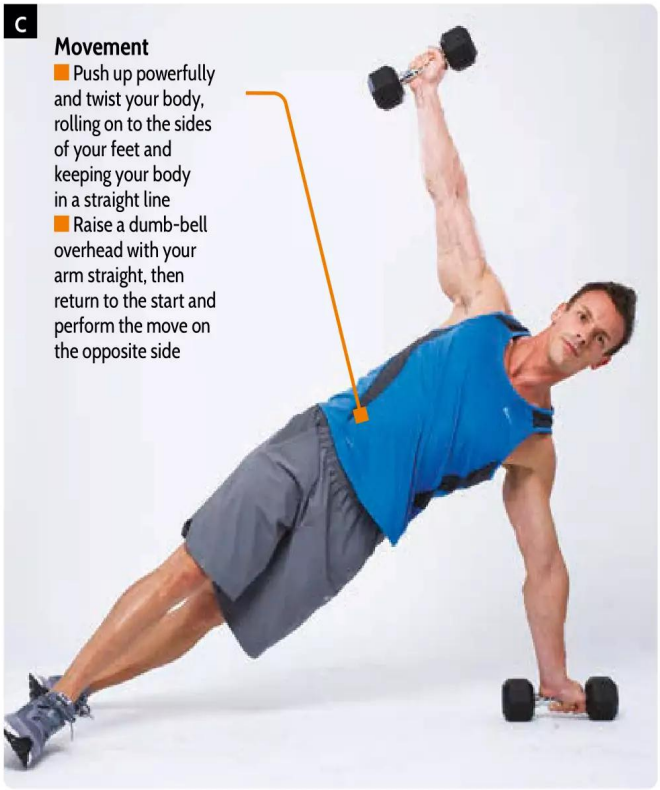


Start position
- Grip the dumb-bells with straight wrists and position them below your shoulders
- Keep your body in a straight line and your elbows tucked in to your body
- Keep your feet shoulder-width apart and don't let your hips sag

B

C

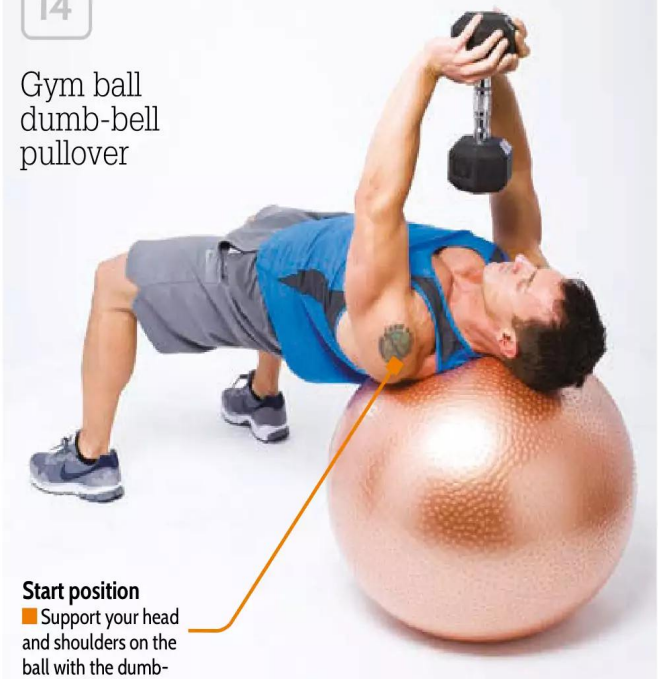
Movement
- Push up powerfully and twist your body, rolling on to the sides of your feet and keeping your body in a straight line
- Raise a dumb-bell overhead with your arm straight, then return to the start and perform the move on the opposite side



Target: chest, shoulders, arms and core
Turn the press-up into an explosive move that works your body in more than one plane of motion.

Dumb-bells & gym ball | Exercises

14 Gym ball dumb-bell pullover



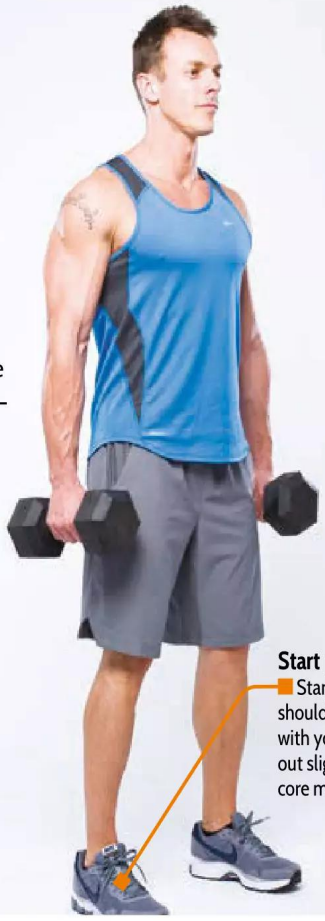
Start position
- Support your head and shoulders on the ball with the dumb-bell in both hands above your chest
- Engage your core and keep your feet flat on the floor

Target: chest, lats and core
Use this single-joint move to hit multiple muscle groups.

Movement
- Lower the weight slowly behind your head, keeping a slight bend in your elbows
- Use your chest muscles to pull the weight back to the start but avoid arching your back to aid the move

15 Dumb-bell squat

Target: quads, glutes, hamstrings
Hit several major muscle groups at once with this must-do leg move.



Start position
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart with your toes turned out slightly and your core muscles braced

Movement
- Hold the dumb-bells by your sides and lower until your thighs are parallel with the ground
- Don't round your back and keep your knees in line with your feet
- Push back up through your heels

Exercises | Dumb-bells & gym ball

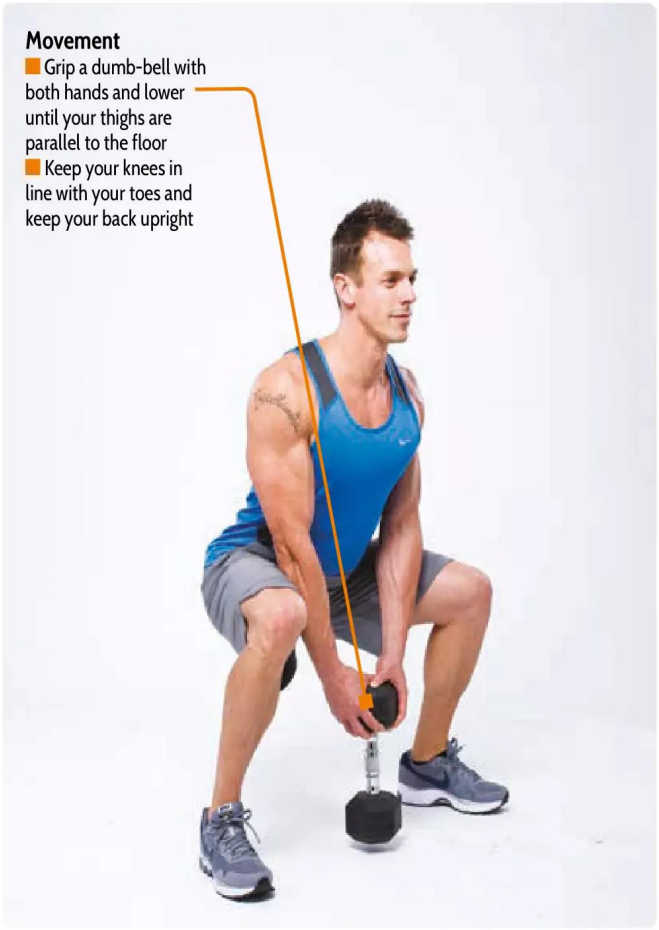
16

Dumb-bell sumo squat

Target: quads
By taking a wider stance you place more emphasis on the inside of your quads.

Start position
- Take a wide stance with your toes pointed out slightly

Movement
- Grip a dumb-bell with both hands and lower until your thighs are parallel to the floor
- Keep your knees in line with your toes and keep your back upright



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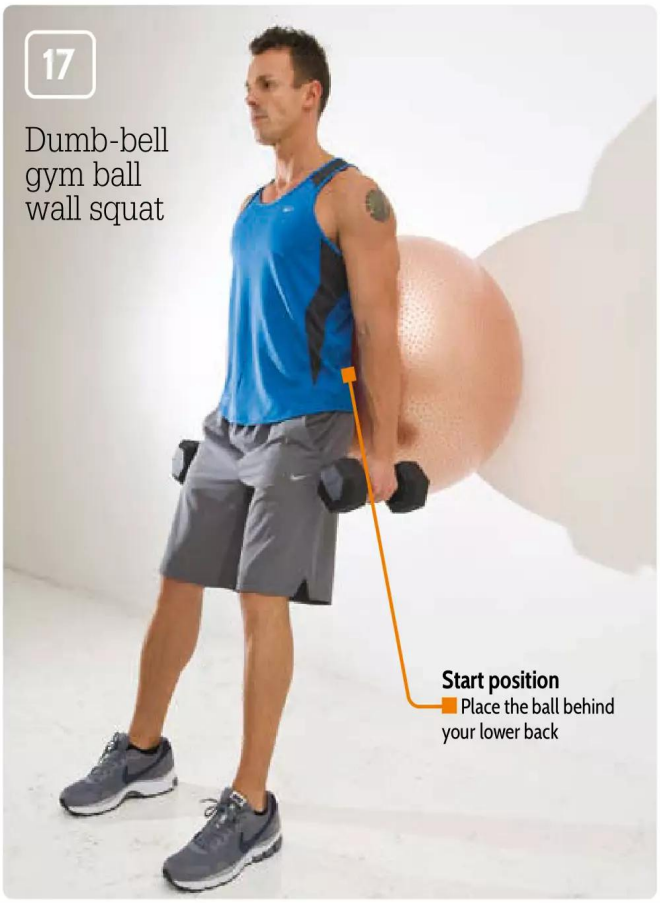
Dumb-bell gym ball wall squat



Start position
- Place the ball behind your lower back

Target: quads
This is a great move if you're unused to doing squats because using a ball will engage your core and improve your coordination for this kind of everyday movement.

Movement
- Let the ball roll up your back as you squat

Dumb-bells & gym ball | Exercises

18

Dumb-bell reverse lunge

Target: quads, hamstrings
By stepping backwards instead of forwards you target your quads and hamstrings in a different way and increase the coordination challenge.

Start position
- Stand with your feet slightly apart, your back upright and the dumb-bells by your sides

Movement
- Step back into a lunge, bending your back leg so your back knee nearly touches the floor
- Keep your torso upright throughout the move and make sure your front knee is over your front toe
- Push off the back foot to return to start

19

Dumb-bell chair step-up

Start position
- Try to find a chair or box that is no taller than knee height and place one foot flat on the top
- Keep your back upright and hold the dumb-bells by your sides

Target: quads, glutes
This exercise has real-life benefits because you do this move every day when you climb stairs!

Movement
- Push up with your leading leg while keeping your back upright
- Step back down with your trailing leg and repeat as before for all your reps before swapping sides

Exercises | Dumb-bells & gym ball

20

Split dumb -bell Romanian deadlift

Start position
- Start in a split stance with the whole of your front foot and the toes of your back foot on the floor

Target: hamstrings

Develop the backs of your legs but make sure you use perfect form to protect your back. This move has huge functional benefits because it's similar to the movements you make when bending down to pick something up.

Movement
- Hold the weight either side of your thigh and initiate the move from your hips, not your waist
- Keep your back flat and let the weights travel down your shins or until you feel a good stretch in your hamstrings

21

Gym ball hamstring curl

Target: hamstrings

This move will develop your hamstrings while improving your stability in your hips and lower back.

Start position
- Rest your head and shoulders on the floor and keep your body in a straight line from shoulders to heels with your arms by your sides and your heels on top of the ball

Movement
- Raise your hips and drag the ball towards your backside with your heels, keeping your body straight throughout the move
- Pause at the top of the move and return slowly to the start

Dumb-bells & gym ball | Exercises

22

Supine gym ball calf raise

Target: calves
This works your hard-to-target calves, forcing them to stabilise your entire body, which will help during bigger lifts.

Start position
- Rest your head and shoulders on the ball with your body in a straight line and your knees bent at 90˚

Movement
- Push up on to your toes and hold for a a count of two before lowering down

Fit tip

Limit your reps
Increase muscle size by upping the resistance rather than the number of reps. Try holding a dumb-bell on your chest during calf raises.

23

Gym ball dumb-bell shoulder press

Start position
- Sit on the ball with your feet flat on the floor and the dumb-bells held at shoulder height and your elbows out to the sides

Movement
- Keep your core braced throughout the move and avoid arching your back
- Press the weights directly overhead but don't let the weights touch at the top

Target: deltoids
Using dumb-bells allows your arms to move in a natural arc and will give you balanced muscle development. The gym ball calls on your stabilising muscles to keep your torso steady throughout the move.

Push/pull split workout (push session)

A push/pull split routine is similar to an upper lower/body one in that you do two types of workout. In this case, you alternate between workouts involving pushing moves and workouts involving pulling moves.

This way of splitting workouts can be attractive for people who enjoy sports with a lot of pushing movements, such as rugby. However, you still need to do an equal amount of pulling moves for balanced muscle development and power.

Designing your workout

If you're doing a push day, all the moves in your workout should be pushing moves. These are ones that work your chest, quads, shoulders, triceps and calves. Aim to make your workout balanced, so include moves that work all those parts. Use different moves and angles in different push sessions. Start with moves that target big muscles, such as your chest, quads and shoulders, then go on to the smaller muscles of your triceps and calves.

If you're doing a pulling workout, the same rules apply. So you'd include moves that target your back, hamstrings, biceps and abs.

Push/pull split sample workout (push session)

1. Dumb-bell T press-up | **Sets: 2**
   Reps: 10 each side Page: 39
2. Dumb-bell sumo squat | **Sets: 3**
   Reps: 10-12 Page: 41
3. Gym ball shoulder press | **Sets: 3**
   Reps: 10-12 Page: 44
4. Dumb-bell step-up | **Sets: 2**
   Reps: 10 each side Page: 42
5. Gym ball chair dip | **Sets: 3**
   Reps: 10-12 Page: 34
6. Supine gym ball calf raise | **Sets: 3**
   Reps: 10-12 Page: 44

Post-exhaustion workout

Weight training can be divided into compound moves and isolation moves. Compounds use several muscle groups at once, while isolations target one muscle group on its own. Post-exhaustion training involves pairing a compound move with an isolation one.

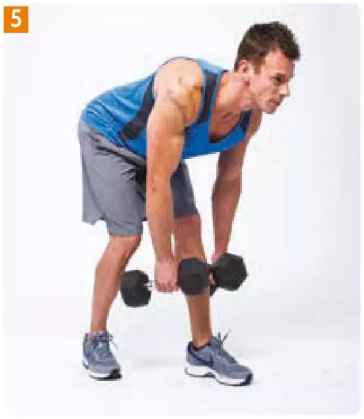
This gets your muscles pumped with heavy weights, then when you move to lighter weight isolations you fatigue the target muscle. This is good for muscle growth because you exhaust high numbers of muscle fibres. Your body then repairs those fibres to be bigger and stronger than before.

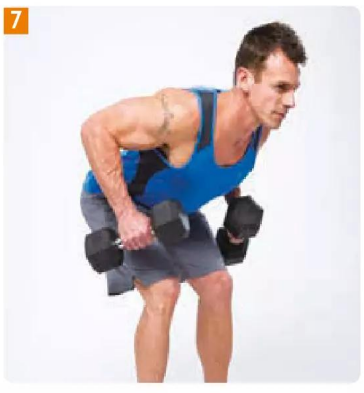
Designing your workout

If you're training your chest, start by doing sets of a chest press, for example, which works your chest, triceps and shoulders. You could then move on to dumb-bell flyes, which focus just on your chest. Avoid starting with the isolation move – it can fatigue your target muscle for lifting heavy on the compound move. That increases strain on smaller supporting muscles, which may lead to injury.

Post-exhaustion e.g workout

1. Dumb-bell squat | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 40**
2. One-leg squat | **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 each side Page: 27**
3. Gym ball dumb-bell press | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 37**
4. Gym ball dumb-bell flye | **Sets: 3 Reps: 12 Page: 39**
5. Split dumb-bell Romanian deadlift **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 each side Page: 43**
6. Gym ball hamstring curl | **Sets: 3 Reps: 12 Page: 43**
7. Dumb-bell bent-over row | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 35**
8. Bent-over flye | **Sets: 3 Reps: 12 Page: 36**





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Welcome some additions...

Explore even more exercise options by adding some simple bits of kit to your home workouts

Any fitness fan will tell you that after weeks of working similar moves with the same kit, it's like being a kid with a new toy when you add a new home workout accessory. It doesn't have to be a fancy gadget or bit of machinery – a simple pull-up bar, medicine ball or resistance band added to your home gym will open up new areas of workout possibilities – without taking over your spare room (or cash). This chapter shows you key moves you can do with the most portable and convenient of kit: the resistance band.

What it does

Resistance bands differ from other home gym weights because the resistance increases towards the top of the move, which challenges your muscles in a new way. They are incredibly versatile; like a multi-gym without weights. All you do is attach one end to something stable, such as your standing foot, or a door, and start pulling or pushing, altering the length of band to vary resistance.

They also work your muscles in a different way from training with free weights. When using free weights, resistance is greatest at the start of the move. It then reduces as you gather momentum towards the top of the move. With resistance bands, it's the other way round, so they challenge your muscles in a different way, which can result in new muscle growth.

What to buy

There are two main types of resistance band. The first comes without hand straps, is made of latex rubber and is also known as a stretchband. The other type is sometimes called a resistance tube and comes with handles at both ends, which makes it easier to hold.

Resistance tubes come in different levels of resistance. You can either buy more than one (often as a deal) and use different bands, or use the same band and adjust the length of the part of the band you're stretching. The best resistance bands are ones that allow you to adjust the length so you can create tension as required.

What next?

A pull-up bar is another great investment and is pretty easy to install. It lets you perform pull-ups and chin-ups – two of the most effective moves for building muscle.

A medicine ball is a weighted orb that works your body dynamically to improve your coordination and balance. Plus, it can be thrown and caught without leaving dents in your floor or dislocations in your fingers – bonus. They can also be used to hold or balance on your body to add resistance to bodyweight moves, making them progressively challenging to your growing muscles.

Exercises | Extra Kit

01

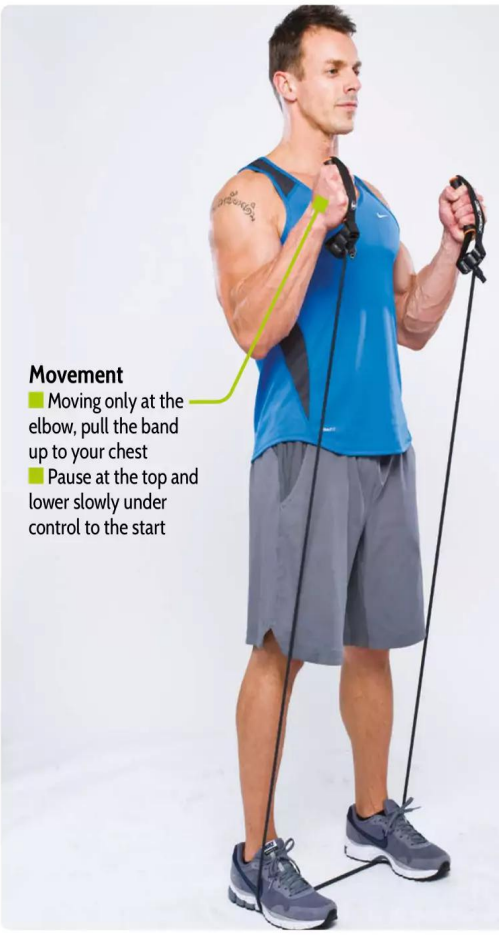
Hammer curl

Start position

- Position your feet so you're standing on the middle part of the band with an equal length of band either side of your feet
- Hold the band so that when your hands are by your sides there is some tension in the band

Target: biceps

Doing a hammer curl as opposed to a straight biceps curl takes the emphasis away from your biceps brachii and poses more of a challenge to your forearms.



Movement

- Moving only at the elbow, pull the band up to your chest
- Pause at the top and lower slowly under control to the start

Start position

- Hold one end of the band behind your back at hip level and the other behind your head with your elbow bent
- Make sure there is some tension in the band before you start

Movement

- Keeping your lower arm still, pivot at the elbow to extend your arm overhead until it is almost straight
- Pause at the top of the move and return slowly to the start

Target: triceps

Isolate the backs of your arms with this single-joint move.

02

Resistance band triceps extension

Extra Kit | Exercises

Start position
- Anchor one end of the band under one foot and grasp the handle with the hand on the same side, palm facing away from you at shoulder height

03

One-arm shoulder press

Target: shoulders
Doing this as a one-arm move brings your core into play as it works to keep your torso stable and sturdy.

Movement
- Press the band above your head until your arm is almost straight
- Pause at the top and return slowly to the start

Start position
- Loop the band over the top of a door and kneel down, holding both handles with your arms up and straight, slightly in front of your head

04

Lat pull-down

Target: lats, biceps
Hook the band over the top of a door to build your back strength.

Movement
- Keeping your forearms parallel throughout the move, bring your hands down to your chest, squeezing your shoulder blades together at the bottom of the move

Exercises | Extra Kit

05

Seated row

Target: traps, lats, rhomboids
Work your back muscles with this simple but effective move.

Start position
- Sit with your legs straight and make sure that there is tension in the band when you loop it round the soles of your feet and your arms are out in front of you

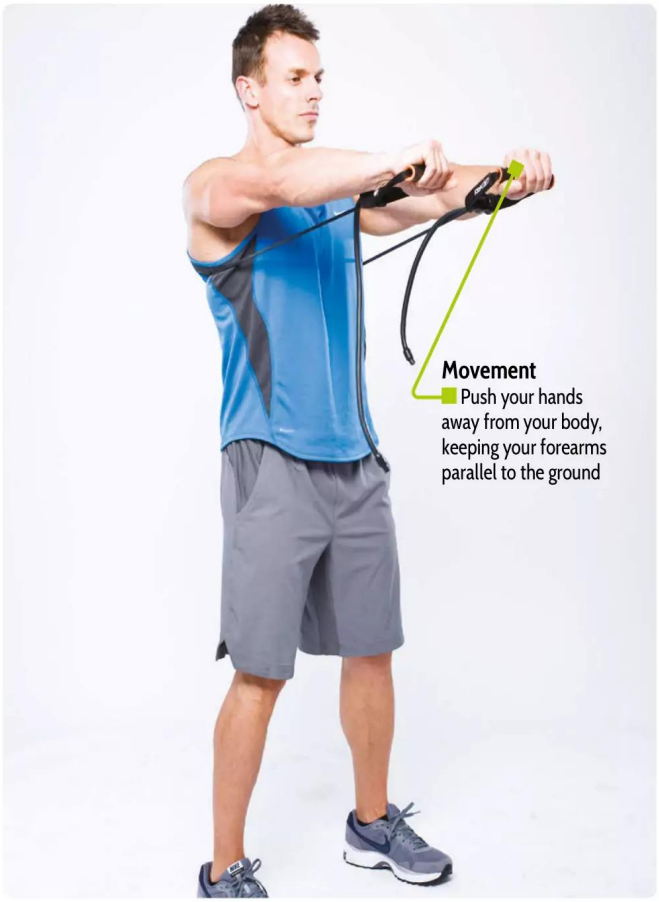
Movement
- Pull the band back until your hands are level with your chest
- Squeeze your shoulder blades together at the top of the move and return slowly to the start

06

Standing chest press

Target: chest
Adapt this classic move by looping the band around your back to develop your pecs.

Start position
- Loop the band behind your back at chest height and start with some tension in the band and your fists level with your chest



Movement
- Push your hands away from your body, keeping your forearms parallel to the ground

Extra Kit | Exercises

Target: quads, glutes, hamstrings
Using a resistance band to do squats increases the resistance as you stand up, working your muscles in a different way to a pair of dumb-bells or a barbell.

Start position
- Stand on the band and hold it so there's tension in the band when you're in the 'down' position

07
Squat

Movement
- Keeping your back straight, push up through your heels to a standing position and then lower slowly back to the start

Start position
- Secure the handle of one end of the band around one of your feet and stand on the band with your other foot so there's tension on the band when the toes on the working leg are level with the heel of the standing leg
- Keep the knee of your working leg tucked into your other knee

08
Leg curl

Movement
- Slowly raise your heel behind you for the full range of movement. Keep your toes pointing down
- Control the movement back to the start and swap legs each set

Target: hamstrings
Work the backs of your legs to balance the quad-dominant work you do when performing squats.

Exercises | Extra Kit

09

Crunch

Target: abdominals
The resistance band increases the difficulty of the move so you can work your abs even harder.

Start position
- Loop the band around a solid structure such as a table leg
- Lie on the floor with your back to the table and hold the band by the handles so that there's tension in it before you start the crunch

Movement
- Crunch upwards against the resistance of the band, pause, then and lower yourself, with under control, avoiding touching your shoulders to the floor between reps

10

Lunge

Target: glutes, quads, hamstrings
Work your entire lower body with this dynamic move that tests your coordination.

Start position
- Hold the band in each hand with one foot over the middle of the band
- Take a step back with your other foot so that the thigh of the leg securing the band is parallel to the floor – making sure there's tension in the bend in this position

Movement
- Drive up with your back foot to return to the start
- Swap legs each set

Extra Kit | Exercises

Start position
- Stand with one foot slightly in front of the other and the band beneath it
- Hold one end of the band in each hand with your arms by your sides

11

Lateral raise

Target: deltoids
This move will strengthen your shoulders and make them look broader.

Movement
- Raise your arms straight out to your sides but don't let them go beyond shoulder height
- Pause at the top of the move and lower slowly under control

Start position
- Stand on the band with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent.
- Hold the handles in both hands

Target: whole body
Use this dynamic movement to build a strong core which improves your upper-to-lower body force transfer.

12

Woodchop

Movement
- Draw the band up and to one side in a chopping motion, rotating your torso as you go
- Pause at the top, then return to the start the way you came

Resistance band workout

Resistance bands challenge your muscles in a different way to conventional weights because the resistance increases towards the top of a move. This is the exact opposite to conventional weights, which become easier to lift at the top of the move as momentum kicks in. The different type of stress is good; your muscles love new stimulus. If your muscles have become used to dumb-bells, doing the same exercises with a resistance band will adapt and strengthen them... so you can lift more dumb-bells.

Designing your workouts

You can use a resistance band to do virtually all the workout options in this guide. If you want to do a superset, for example, simply arrange your exercises and rest periods in the same way you'd construct the workout if you were using other kit.

Some workouts, such as drop sets or back-off sets, aren't ideally suited to resistance bands because it's best to be precise about how much weight you're lifting. You can, however, make any exercise easier or harder depending on the length and resistance of the band, so it is still possible to use those techniques.

Resistance band sample workout

1 Squat | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 52**

2 Leg curl | **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 each side Page: 52**

4 Standing chest press | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 51**

5 Hammer curl | **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 each side Page: 49**

6 Triceps extension | **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 each side Page: 49**

7 Shoulder press | **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 each side Page: 50**

8 Crunch | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 53**

Extra Kit | **Exercises**

Circuit training workout

You can create a circuit workout using either bodyweight or minimal kit but introducing a new item of kit, such as a resistance band, will test your muscles in a different way. This will give you a new training effect, although circuits are still most suitable for people who want to lose fat rather than increase muscle size.

The key theory remains the same whatever used. Doing different exercises back to back with no rest keeps your effort high and forces your heart to pump blood to different parts of your body, providing cardiovascular and muscle-building benefits.

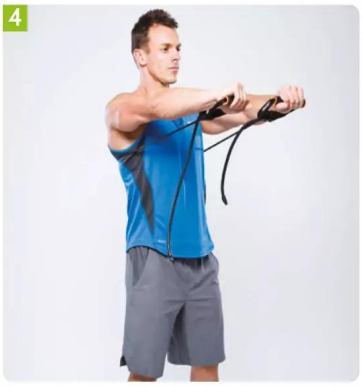
Designing your workouts

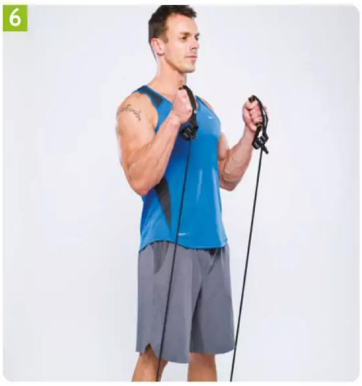
For circuits to be at their most effective, you need to move from one exercise to the next as swiftly as possible, which is why it's best to do all moves with one item of kit. Pick a group of exercises that target as many muscles as possible and alternate between upper and lower body moves to make your heart work harder. Include a mix of pushing, pulling, lunging, bending and rotational moves to give your workout balance. Complete the reps quickly, without compromising form.

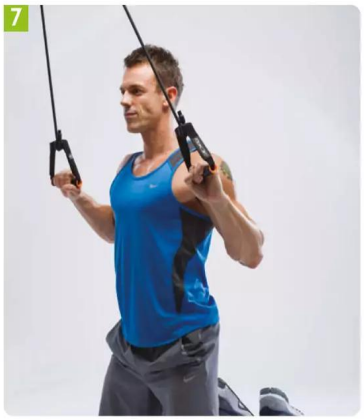
Rest for three minutes after one circuit, then repeat as much as you've challenged yourself!

Resistance band circuit training sample workout

1. Lunge | **Sets: 1 Reps: 10 each side Page: 53**
2. Lateral raise | **Sets: 1 Reps: 10 Page: 54**
3. Squat | **Sets: 1 Reps: 10 Page: 52**
4. Standing chest press | **Sets: 1 Reps: 10 Page: 51**
5. Seated row | **Sets: 1 Reps: 10 Page: 51**
6. Hammer curl | **Sets: 1 Reps: 10 each side Page: 49**
7. Lat pull-down | **Sets: 1 Reps: 10 Page: 50**
8. Woodchop | **Sets: 1 Reps: 10 each side Page: 54**







Barbell & bench guide

Get ready to start lifting heavy by using a barbell and bench

Bench

What it does

There's a reason you don't see people doing heavy barbell chest presses on a gym ball. A bench offers you a stable platform for big lifts so you can lift heavy without worrying about losing control. There are two main bench types: a utility bench – just a basic platform – and a press bench, which has a barbell cradle to hold a barbell above where your head rests. To lift heavy without a spotter, choose a bench press.

What to look for

The bench needs to be stable when you're sat on it and, more importantly, when lifting a heavy weight. If it creaks and strains, you'll be more worried about ending up in a heap of metal than you are watching out for perfect form.

A bench with a good incline and decline range will increase the number of exercises you can perform, as will one with a high number of adjustment levels. Make sure the bench is comfortable to lie on when you're lifting a heavy weight and that you can set it at a height that allows you to lie with your back and shoulders on the bench and both feet flat on the floor.

A bench-press bench with adjustable arms that hold the bar will be useful for doing heavy standing exercises such as squats and shoulder presses unless you have a friend with you at all times because they allow you to raise the bar safely.

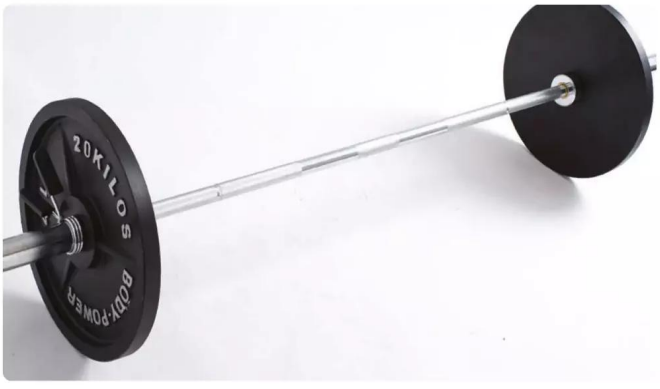
Barbell

What it does

There are two main types of barbell: standard ones use a spinlock system to secure weight plates. Olympic bars use collars to secure the weight plates, have a 2in diameter grip, which is broader than a standard bar, and come in lengths of 5ft, 6ft and 7ft (1.5m-2.1m). Full-length Olympic bars typically weigh 20kg, with shorter ones slightly less. Olympic bars can handle more weight and are sturdier than the standard option but are more expensive.

What to look for

The key things to consider are the total weight of your plate set and the increments in which they ascend. If you want to do big compound lifts, such as squats, you need a total weight that's at least equal your bodyweight. If you want to test yourself, deadlift, rising to a set one and a half times your bodyweight. The more precise you can be about the weight you're lifting, the more chance you have of increasing the amount.



If your weights only go up in 5kg increments, you'll struggle to get to the next level when you want to increase your maximum lift, because it's such a big jump. A set that includes 2.5kg and 1.25kg options will give you much more fitness flexibility.

Barbell & bench | Exercises

01 Bent-over row

Start position
- Start with your core braced, your back straight and your shoulder blades retracted
- Lean forward from the hips, rather than the waist, with your knees slightly bent
- Grip the bar just wider than shoulder-width apart, letting the bar hang down around knee level

Movement
- Pull the barbell up into your sternum, squeezing your shoulder blades together at the top of the move, then lower the bar slowly to the start

Target: traps, lats, rhomboids

Use this big-muscle move to develop your back strength and give balance to the work you do on the bench press.

02 Reverse grip bent-over row

Start position
- Start with your core braced, your back straight and your shoulder blades retracted
- Lean forward from the hips, rather than the waist, and bend your knees slightly
- Take an overhand grip just wider than shoulder-width apart, letting the bar hang at around knee level

Movement
- Pull the barbell up into your sternum, squeezing your shoulder blades together at the top of the move, then lower the bar slowly to the start

Target: traps, lats, rhomboids

Switch to a reverse grip to place more of an emphasis on your lats and lower traps.

Exercises | Barbell & bench

03 Shrug

Target: upper traps
Doing this move will increase your shoulder girdle stability, reducing your chances of injuring yourself during shoulder workouts.

Start position
Stand upright with your shoulders back and grip the bar just outside your thighs

Movement
Raise your shoulders without bending your elbows, hold at the top for one or two seconds and return to the start

04 Upright row

Start position
Stand upright with your shoulders back and grip the bar in front of your thighs

Target: upper traps, shoulders
Hit both your traps and your shoulders with this simple move that develops vertical pulling strength. It's also a useful move to practise explosively before you move on to the more challenging hang clean.

Movement
Raise your elbows high to the sides as you lift the weight

Barbell & bench | Exercises

05

Good morning

Target: lower back, hamstrings, glutes

This move will strengthen your middle back as well as your glutes and hamstrings, but you'll need to maintain perfect form to avoid injury.

Start position

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, your core braced and your shoulders back. Rest the bar across the back of your shoulders, not on your neck
- Keep your shoulders back, bend your knees slightly and keep a natural arch in your lower back

Movement

- Lean forward until you feel a stretch in your hamstrings, but don't go beyond horizontal

06

Bench press

Target: chest

This classic test of strength will help you build a muscular chest.

Start position

- Rest your head and shoulders on the bench, brace your core, contract your shoulder blades and keep a natural arch in your spine
- Bend your knees at 90˚ and keep your feet flat on the floor
- Grip the bar with your hands just wider than shoulder-width apart, lift it from the rack and hold it directly above your chest

Movement

- Lower the bar slowly to your chest and press back up powerfully
- Press down with your feet to aid the movement but avoid arching your back during the pressing motion

Exercises | Barbell & bench

07

Incline bench press

Start position

- Set the bench at 30-45˚, brace your core and keep your feet flat on the floor
- Grip the bar with hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart
- Remove the bar from the rack and hold it directly above your chest

Target: upper chest, front shoulder, triceps

Tilt the back support of the bench to hit your chest from a new angle and work your front shoulders and triceps.

Movement

- Lower the bar slowly to your chest and press up powerfully
- Keep your elbows to the sides and don't arch your back

08

Decline bench press

Target: lower chest

Change the angle of the bench again to make sure you give your chest a balanced workout.

Start position

- Set the bench at a decline
- Grip the bar with hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, lift it from the rack and hold it directly above your chest

Movement

- Lower the bar slowly to your chest and press back up powerfully
- Keep your elbows to the sides and don't arch your back

Barbell & bench | Exercises

09

Squat

Target: quads, glutes, hamstrings
This must-do lower-body move will flood your body with muscle growth hormones and improve your body's ability to stabilise itself.

Start position
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your toes turned out slightly
- Rest the bar on the back of your shoulders, rather than your neck, and grip the bar close to your shoulders
- Keep your elbows back and your core braced

Movement
- Lower until your thighs are parallel to the floor, keeping your knees in line with your toes and a natural arch in your back
- Push back up through your heels

09

Jump squat

Target: quads, glutes, hamstrings
Add a jump to your squat to add a plyometric element to your workout.

Start position
- Sink down into a squat, holding on to the bar securely

Movement
- Push up explosively so your feet leave the ground. Land with a controlled movement and sink into another squat before exploding up again

Exercises | Barbell & bench

10

Bulgarian split squat

Start position

- Rest your back foot on the bench and plant your front foot facing forwards half a metre from the bench
- Keep your hips square to your body, your core braced and your torso upright
- Rest the bar on the back of your shoulders and look straight ahead

Movement

- Keeping your torso upright, lower until your front thigh is almost horizontal
- Keep your front knee in line with your foot

Target: quads, glutes

Placing your back foot on the bench concentrates all the effort on to the front foot, giving you a unilateral workout and balanced muscle gain.

11

Romanian deadlift

Start position

- Start with your feet shoulder-width apart, your torso upright, your core braced and your shoulders back
- Grip the bar just outside your hips
- Keeping your core braced, lower the bar until your feel a strong stretch in your hamstrings

Movement

- Initiate the move by leaning forward from the hips rather than the waist
- Make sure you unlock your knees, push your hips back and let the bar travel securely down the front of your shins
- Keep your back flat throughout the move and your neck in line with your spine

Target: hamstrings

Use this move to make sure you get balanced muscle growth if your workouts include quad-dominant squats. It's also great for teaching your back, hips and legs to work together.

Body part split workout

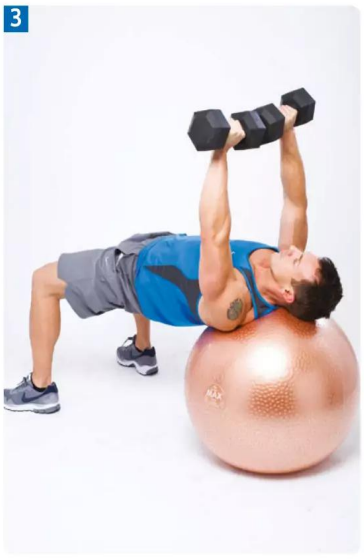
As you become more advanced, you may find you're unable to fatigue your muscles sufficiently in a full-body routine. If that's the case, you should consider doing a split routine where you do a different thing in each session of the week. The most popular form of split routine is a body part split where you train two body parts in a single session.

An example of this would be to train your legs and back in your first workout of the week, your chest and triceps in the second, your shoulders and biceps in the third and you abs and core in the fourth. This system lets you hit every body part hard once a week without having to go to the gym every day.

Designing your workout

Once you have decided on which two body parts you're going to work, do a move that works one of these body parts, then alternate between the two body parts. For example, if you're going to work your legs and back, start with a Romanian deadlift, which works your hamstrings, then do a good morning, which targets your back.

To develop the body part fully, make sure you include a range of exercises that hit the target muscle groups from a variety of angles.



Body part split sample workout legs and back

1 Romanian deadlift | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 63**

2 Good morning | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 60**

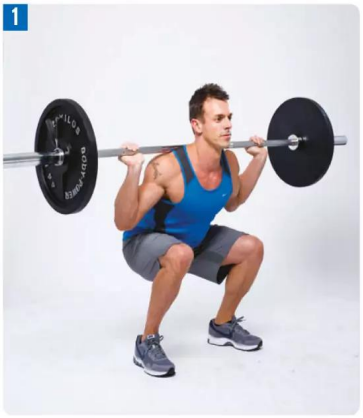
3 Gym ball dumb-bell chest press **Sets: 3 Reps: 10-12 Page: 68**

4 Bent-over row | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 58**

5 Sumo squat | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 72**

6 Dumb-bell bent-over flye | **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 Page: 66**

Post-exhaustion workout



As we saw in the dumb-bell and gym ball section, weight training has two main categories: compound moves and isolation moves. Compound exercises use several muscle groups at once while isolation exercises target one muscle group. Post-exhaustion training involves pairing a compound move with an isolation one.

Designing your workout

In post-exhaustion workouts, the compound move always comes first. You do a big muscle move to get yourself pumped, then you move on to the lighter weight isolation move to completely fatigue the target muscle. For example, if you're training your back, you could do a bent-over row, which recruits your lats, traps and rhomboids. You could then do a bent-over reverse dumb-bell flye, which works your upper back.

You must avoid doing the isolation move first because this may fatigue your target muscle. Then when you come to lift the heavy weight of a compound move, your smaller stabilising muscles will be under increased strain, which can increase your chances of injury.

Post-exhaustion sample workout

1. Barbell squat | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 62**
2. One-leg squat | **Sets: 2 Reps: 10 each side Page: 27**
3. Bench press | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 60**
4. Gym ball dumb-bell flye | **Sets: 3 Reps: 12 Page: 70**
5. Romanian deadlift | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 63**
6. Gym ball hamstring curl | **Sets: 3 Reps: 12 Page: 76**
7. Bent-over row | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 58**
8. Bent-over flye | **Sets: 3 Reps: 12 Page: 36**

Back-off set workout

Back-off sets are two and four sets of low reps with a heavy weight, before dropping the weight significantly for a final set of as many reps as possible (AMRAP). This primes the nerves that stimulate your muscle for action by the heavy sets, allowing you to perform better in the final set than you would had you attempted before the heavy sets.

Designing your workouts

For a back-off set to work, it has to be a move you can do using heavy weights, where you control what you're lifting. That's why big compound moves such as a bench press, rather than stability or bodyweight, work best for back-off sets.

You'll get best results by activating the target muscle group before working it again in a back-off exercise. When you come to do your back-off exercise, choose a weight that you could lift six times. When you do the back-off set, drop the weight by 40 per cent and do as many reps as possible (AMRAP) with perfect form. E.g. you ordinarily bench press 50kg, so reduce this to 30kg for the back-off set. Aim to perform the reps of a back-off set faster than a regular set to develop both explosive power and strength. It burns though, so use it as an occassional body booster.

Back-off set sample workout
Chest and back

1. Gym ball press-up | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 69**
2. Bench press | **Sets: 3 (+1 back-off set) Reps: 6 (+ AMRAP in back off set) Page: 60**
3. Upright row | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 59**
4. Good morning | **Sets: 3 (+1 back-off set) Reps: 6 (+ AMRAP in back-off set) Page: 60**
5. Gym ball back extension | **Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Page: 66**
6. Incline bench press | **Sets: 3 (+1 back-off set) Reps: 6 (+ AMRAP in back-off set) Page: 61**

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